

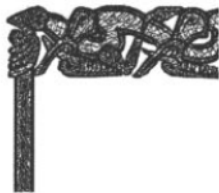
Tabletop Adventures[®] presents
a Plain Brown Wrapper edition

Aztecs

Empire of the Dying Sun



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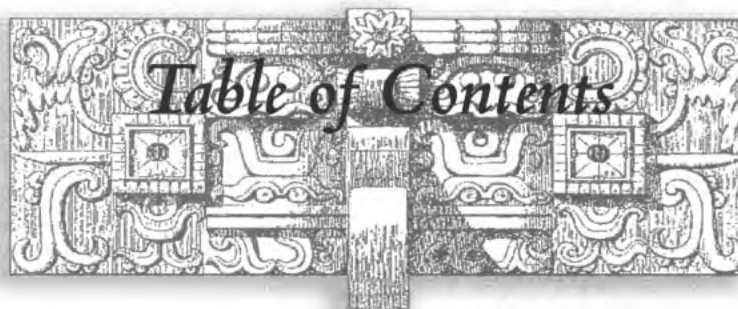
Many of the original covers had artwork that was suggestive (or even provocative), so each book of the series is being reissued in a 'plain brown wrapper.' Text beginning at the Table of Contents and continuing through the page numbered 62 appears exactly as it was originally presented.



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Introduction

The plains of the Aztec nation stretch away from the valley of Mexica in every direction, the white brush stained with the blood of a thousand sacrifices. This is the bitter earth, a savage homeland for an uncompromising people. In this dark place, the gods decree that order shall reign, and the Aztecs, their servants, obey. The heavens are burning with fire and fear, and the gods are filled with wrath. Four of the five suns that once reigned over the world are now extinguished, and the Aztecs stand on the edge of eternal darkness. Only sacrifice will keep the fifth sun in the sky, and that means that there must be prisoners to kill for the sake of the sun's power. As brutal as it may seem to the other tribes of the Mexican lands, the Aztecs are in their own way trying to save the world. They do not need approval or acquiescence. They only need blood and sacrifice. Their cause is noble even if their means are savage.

These are the lands of feathered serpents and ancient ruins covered in vines and reclaimed by jungle wilderness. It is not a tame or gentle place. War is everywhere, both within and outside of human civilization. Monsters created by vengeful powers hunt those who wander alone. The mountains rise, cold and snowy, over burning fields and bitter oceans. There is no respite for the weak. The city of Tenochtitlan is a bastion of stone above canals of muddy water. Thick stone bridges guarded by soldiers in feathered headdresses protect those who live within but only from human threats. There can be no protection from the furor of the gods above.

Few role-playing games venture into the Empire of the Sun, the realm of the Aztec and Aztec lands. This book will take you to a strange place of fear and honor — a land where brutality is common, as is mathematical precision. It is unlike any other realm you may discover, and its beckons with a hand of blood. Expect no mercy, no relief from the poisonous sun that is dying in the heavens. Here, the legends are true. *AZTECS: EMPIRE OF THE DYING SUN* offers both the myth and its source — background and history for

the Aztecs in your d20 campaign. You'll find adventure hooks, source material, legends, creatures, prestige classes, feats and more inside — everything you need to run a complete campaign within the Aztec lands (or just to add a little touch of Aztec to your current one).

The Aztec Emperor, the only mortal purely descended from the gods, rules Tenochtitlan from his high throne of gold. Ruins dot the landscape of these lands, hidden in the depths of dense jungle or on high mountain cliffs. Adventurers will find plenty to do here — from treasure-hunting to war, from searching for ruins in the depths of sacred jungles to fighting demons and evil creatures that prey on humanity. The unwary may find themselves unlucky enough to be chosen as sacrifices to appease the sun's wrath. Those who disbelieve the ancient tales need only to stand upon the Pyramid of the Sun, or walk among the monsters of the jungles, to know that legend is indeed truth. Welcome to the Empire of the Sun.

Empire of the Dying Sun

The great pyramids of Teotihuacan, massive pillars of stone, stand above the ancient lands of the Aztecs. The Aztecs live within a culture of death and sacrifice, pride and loyalty, where a life on this world is worth very little when compared to that which lies beyond this pale, reflected land. Once, long ago, the powerful god, Quetzalcoatl, walked among mortals, leading his people from the northern lands of Tenochtitlan into the rich plains of the warm south. This journey began the conquest of the southern nations and the rise of the Aztecs as the primary empire of Mexica.

Mexica?

"Mexica" is the name that the Aztecs gave to their homeland. When the Spanish arrived, they made a change. The name of a country, in their view, should be male. "Mexica" would be feminine in Spanish due to it ending with the letter, "a." Hence, they changed the name to "Mexico" to give it a masculine designation.

The term, "Aztec," is a startlingly imprecise word to describe the varied and unique culture that dominates the Valley of Mexico. Properly speaking, all Nahuatl-speaking people in the Valley of Mexico are Aztecs, while the culture that dominates the area is actually that of a tribe of the Mexica known as the Toltec. To many of the other tribes of the region, the lands of the Aztec Empire are known as the lands of the Toltec.

The Aztecs migrated from the north into the Valley of Mexico, bringing with them a vast and rich culture. They are like no other people in the western lands – their culture, civilization and society are completely unique. They are the heart of the sun, the people chosen by the Light-bringer to keep the world alive. Invigorated and dedicated to this mission, they build cities, make war, and live eternally in the shadow of their greater purpose. Legend has it that the Aztecs came from the island of Aztlan, a word meaning the "Isle of Herons." The primary Aztec god, Huitzilopochtli, commanded the people to take a journey to the south. They were told little more than this: "Where the eagle kills the snake, there you will raise a great city and found an empire in my name."

The people of Huitzilopochtli did exactly as they had been told, and thus the massive city of Tenochtitlan was born. The empire it spawned would unite hundreds of lesser nations and tribes and give birth to myth and legend beyond anything before known in the lands of Mexico.

Midway across the continent, at an elevation of nearly 7,500 feet, lies the celebrated Valley of Mexico. It is a massive oval about 200 miles in circumference and is encompassed by a towering rampart of rock, which nature must have provided specifically to protect it from invasion. The soil, once lush and verdant, is now carved bare beneath the marching feet of Aztec warriors. In the center of this valley lies the City of the Sun, the heart of the Empire.

This is Tenochtitlan. From here, the Aztecs spread south and eastward to conquer thousands of square miles of territory. Thousands of native villages and small tribes have been integrated into the Aztec nation. Yet, in opposition to their savage reputation, the Aztecs are also among the most civilized people of their time. Their grasp of mathematics and science and their creation of an intricate calendar are far beyond the means of other cultures. The Aztecs are a contradiction in terms: a people who track history and time, but who care more for the future than for the lessons of the past. War is their livelihood; blood is their reward.

For the Aztecs, the purpose of these wars is not to kill their enemies or even to conquer them. What they desire is a

ceaseless supply of prisoners, taken alive so that later they can be sacrificed to the great god, Huitzilopochtli. Human sacrifice is not unique to the Aztecs, but they practice it on such a scale that an endless amount of victims is required. They believe the world is kept alive by a single sun, whose power in the heavens grows weaker with each passing year. It must be kept in the sky by the continuous sacrifice of human lives.

Aztec power in the lands of Central America is buttressed by an entire spiritual pantheon of fear. Powerful and inhuman gods stand guard over the common people, protecting and menacing them at the same time. There is no room for mercy in the hearts of the Aztec people because there is no room for it in the hearts of their gods.

The Aztec worship deities that are drastically different from humans. These are not the animistic Greek gods whose faces and actions make sense to humanity. The Aztec gods are an uncertain race, and they are very different from their parishioners. They cannot be understood by human minds and must simply be obeyed.

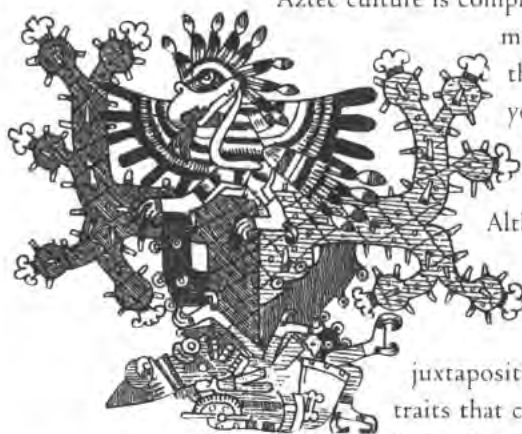
These deities are a blend of monstrosity and humanity. They represent both filth and purification. Some shed their skins

during spring, destroying their own bodies in savage and carnal ways. Yet these same monsters are capable of caring gently for the souls of human beings as they cross into the silent kingdoms of death. The mother goddess, Coatlique, dominates them all: she is the Earth Mother from whom all harvests grow. She is the most fearsome figure in all Aztec Mythology, termed the Woman with the Skirt of Snakes and depicted as a writhing being whose lower body is reptilian, covered in mounds of snaky tendrils. "We are not human," the gods stoically proclaim. "We are divine. We are implacable. We uphold the order of the world, demanding your sacrifice. You cannot refuse it. You are only repaying the gods who created you."

The Aztec people remain unequalled in many things – in their calendars, their elegant and rich furnishings and clothing, and in their bloodlust. To be an Aztec is to be a warrior – this is a fact of life, and death is a familiar and friendly face to the people of Tenochtitlan. The Aztecs raise their massive structures, lifting the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon hundreds of feet out of the barren plains to be watchers over the Aztec lands. With this, and through their sacrifices, the Aztecs entreat the gods to keep the world alive. Should they fail and the fires of Tenochtitlan go out, the world will be plunged into an eternal darkness, never again to see light.



Part 1: Aztec Culture



Aztec culture is complex and intricate, made up of thousands of years of tradition and societal mores.

Although some may say that the Aztecs are a dichotomy, a juxtaposition of different traits that cannot possibly be unified, the people of the

Toltec lands are simply acting on impulses and morals that are not easily understood. They are brutal and compassionate, peaceful and warlike, learned and primitive. It is a mystifying conflict within their culture that they hardly seem to notice. To the Aztecs, their ways are sensible ones; they are laws and traditions passed down from the mouths of the gods themselves.

The typical Aztec is sensitive to beauty and to religious and philosophical symbolism. He or she is inclined to be pompous (particularly the priests) and may be humorless but is also honest and hard-working. They love their families. They are fallible, and may commit acts of barbarism and dishonesty. They are simply this: human.

Proper Behavior

The Aztec people are, by nature, very long-suffering and are rarely excited or angry. Open displays of emotion (unless provoked by a sport or on the battlefield) are considered rude and uncouth. They are a proud people, a culture that is pleased in its accomplishments both on the battlefield and within its tremendous cities. Success in war gives the Aztecs a sense of moral and physical superiority and a quiet arrogance that permeates their actions. Yet they rarely speak this feeling aloud, considering such emotional outbursts to be improper and a mark of poor breeding. The structure and values of the Aztec society are designed to foster competition and achievement, and Aztecs excel in many areas. They are a people filled with ambition and self-esteem as well as a quiet, inner passion. Moderation, responsibility, and self-restraint are essential behaviors. Among their worst crimes are those of adultery and drunkenness – both crimes of excess – two evils that are kept down by emotional control and repression.

A well-bred Aztec noble is expected to be responsible and to behave with dignity. Dignity and thoughtfulness are the

virtues of an Aztec noble and are greatly respected within their ruling class. The perfect noble is serious and modest, wishing no praise, and is chaste and devout. Well-educated by priests, a leader is expected to be eloquent but discreet in conversation. Nobles must be diligent, wise and polite, even to those who are beneath them. The Aztecs do not routinely beat or mistreat their lower classes (not even their slaves), for to do so would be to prove that one is not in control of his or her emotions. Further, the Aztecs possess a strong sense of respect for life (one reason why they consider human life to be the greatest of sacrifices, and therefore suited to the Gods).

A famous Aztec father told his son: "Revere and greet your elders; console the poor and the afflicted with good works and words. . . . Follow not the madmen who honor neither father nor mother, for they are like animals: they neither take nor hear advice. . . . Do not mock the old, the sick, the maimed, or one who has sinned. Do not insult or abhor them, but abase yourself before God and fear lest the same befall you. . . . Do not set a bad example, or speak indiscreetly, or interrupt the speech of another. If someone does not speak well or coherently, see that you do not do the same; if it is not your business to speak, be silent. If you are asked something, reply soberly and without affectation or flattery or prejudice to others, and your speech will be well regarded. . . . Wherever you go, walk with a peaceful air and do not make wry faces or improper gestures."

Physical Grace

Both men and women possess great powers of endurance. From childhood, Aztec commoner and noble alike are accustomed to hard physical labor. Even the women walk great distances, following their men and carrying a share of equipment and also the newest baby. People of importance pride themselves on their physical condition as well as their behavior and always try to walk gracefully. They keep themselves in good shape until late in their lives. Hand and facial movements are important, and an Aztec will accompany his conversation with dignified gestures and a facial expression appropriate to the occasion.

Of course, not all of the Aztec people attain such high standards. Nobles are held to a much greater set of expectations for



behavior than commoners or slaves. They must set a good example for the entire culture. Nobility is not simply attained through birth (although high-born children are usually raised to it). It may also be purchased or granted for a man's brave deeds. Therefore, these standards of behavior are very important since anyone who is well-regarded as a sober and diligent member of society may become noble simply through good acts.

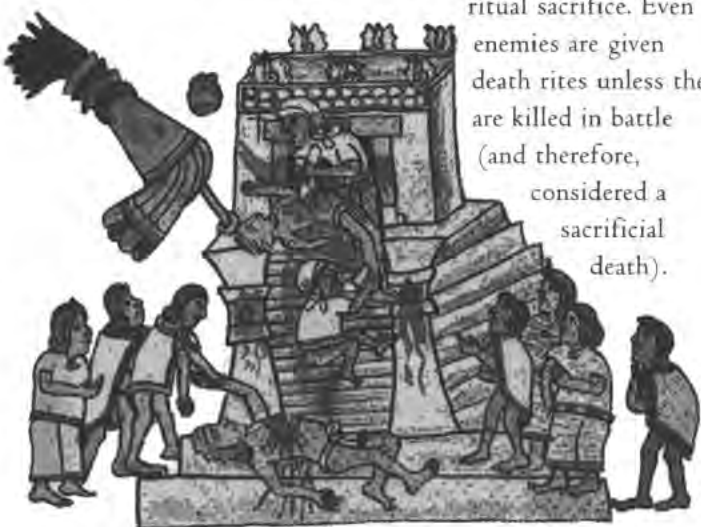
Death Ceremonies

Death is an important event in Aztec society. Whether it happens upon a battlefield, through ritual sacrifice, or by what is termed a "straw," or bloodless death, it is heavily accentuated by ceremony and ritual.

When a mortal dies a straw death, he or she is mourned more greatly than those who die upon the battlefield. A bloodless or peaceful death (even if caused by disease or accident) is not a proud death, and the spirit of the dead will be sent to the underworld of Mictlampa and tested for four years before his or her spirit is released into the thirteen heavens. Those who die valorously immediately go to the heavens, since they were already tested on the Earth. If they died while destroying their enemies, or were heroes, their spirits go to the side of the Sun God, Huitzilopochtli. There, they will serve as his minions and guards for four years before retiring to the thirteen heavens with great honor. The underworld, made up of nine separate hells, is the province of Mictlantecuhtli and Mictlancihuatl. It is a domain of darkness, completely separate from the physical world, where there is neither light nor shadow. There, the soul will be tested for bravery and honor, and, if found wanting, it will be destroyed.

Funerary Rites

Aztec funerary rites do not change, no matter how the death occurred, so long as that death did not occur by ritual sacrifice. Even enemies are given death rites unless they are killed in battle (and therefore, considered a sacrificial death).



Cannibalism

Cannibalism is not prevalent among the Aztecs, but it does occur under certain circumstances. All acts of human cannibalism have a ritual or symbolic meaning. Among the Aztecs, it is an act of sacrifice to the gods. It is thought to be a means of acquiring the desirable qualities of the victim such as the bravery of a slain warrior.

Aztec cannibalism is nothing like that of primitive savages squatting about a campfire and gluttonously wolfing half-cooked human flesh and viscera. Rather, it is a cultivated people's formal banquet (held in a stately, flower-and-incense-perfumed chamber), with a great number of foods elegantly served in gold and silver vessels. During the ceremonial feast, the sacrificial warrior is killed, blooded, butchered, and cooked. His body is exquisitely prepared and seasoned according to one of several gourmet recipes specifically for such rituals. It is another example of the marriage of cultured grace and sadistic barbarism of this dichotomous people.

During the funerary rites, the Aztec priest takes the body and washes it. The priest places a few drops of water on the head like another baptism. Beside the head, he places a bowl of water. Then, in a very specific order, religious papers are laid upon the corpse with the following legend: "With this you shall pass the two mountains, where the serpent awaits. Cross the eight deserts and traverse the place of the winds that drive with obsidian knives." Sometimes, these words are painted onto the body with blood.

Sacrificial Deaths

Those who die a sacrificial death are treated differently. Because they are considered to be directly taken by the gods, the bodies of sacrificial victims are left where they lie — usually, in a pit or ravine — so that the creatures of nature may clean the bones and revere the dead. Their bodies are considered to be the province of the gods, and for humanity to make use of them or disturb them in any way after their sacrifice, is to insult the gift that was given to the gods.

Weddings

Aztec society is very structured and has closely followed rules and traditions for each major point in an individual's life. Weddings, the traditional union between a man and a woman (or one man and several women, since polygamy is accepted in Aztec culture), is revered and celebrated with much ceremony and pomp. A young Aztec boy may marry only after he reaches the age of 20 and only if he has proven himself. For noble families, this task is typically performed by facing and killing an enemy in battle.

Commoners or slaves may prove themselves through any act that betters society – building an important structure or offering an expensive sacrifice to the local temple.

Most Aztecs marry for the first time between the ages of 20 and 22. Marriages are usually arranged between families, and the young couple has little say in the matter. After his first marriage, an Aztec male may choose his

own brides, or take concubines from slaves captured from conquered tribes. These secondary wives have no rights within the marriage other than the right to bear children and claim the protection of their husband; only the first marriage may be arranged for political and monetary gain.

The first requirement of marriage is that the young man must complete his education and obtain permission from his teachers to leave school. His family offers a banquet for the teachers, which doubles as an opportunity for both families (the prospective bride and groom) to meet one another within a social situation.

If the bride is satisfactory and the teachers of the young man approve his release from school, then the preparations and negotiations move forward.

If the bride's family accepts, then the parents of the groom send a sacrifice to the temple, requesting the advice of the priests and fortunetellers. A priest studies the signs under which the bride-to-be was born and then offers his advice about whether the wedding should go through. If the signs are fortunate, then the plans continue, and both families sign a contract – a pledge of marriage between the two young Aztecs. If they are not favorable, then the entire negotiation is called off and another bride must be sought.

Afterwards, the male relatives of the groom bring forward an axe that symbolizes his desire to cut the ties that bind him to his family. He wants to be married, and to do so, he must be ready to make his own family and step away from his old one. The young man accepts the axe as a symbol of his parents' consent. Once he has accepted it, he publicly promises to obey the gods, to be honorable, to be a good provider for his wife and family, and to be a brave warrior. At this point, the young man may no longer live in his father's house. He must build or purchase his own. He may not marry until he has a home to offer to his wife, so building one is the next requirement for the marriage.

Meanwhile, the older women of the area (the respected women elders, known as the *cibuatlanque*) visit the bride's family. The *cibuatlanque* are formally paid by the groom



Cosmetics

The Aztec skin is naturally brown or bronze-colored, but the fashionable shade for a woman's complexion is a bright, soft yellow. To achieve this effect, a woman will rouge her face and cheeks as well as her hands. She rubs her skin with a yellow earth cream containing axin, a waxy substance obtained by cooking and crushing the bodies of fat-producing insects. Travelers also used axin ointment as a salve to prevent the lips from cracking in frosty weather and to protect the skin from the effects of cold. Perfumes, rose water, and incense are also popular cosmetics for women, especially among the nobility. A kind of chewing gum (made of chicle mixed with axin and bitumen) is often used to sweeten the breath and is also enjoyed as a candy.

Men paint their faces and bodies on ceremonial occasions, and the Aztecs follow the example of their gods, who cover their arms and chests with tattooed designs. Priests of the various deities (particularly of Mictlantecuhtli and Tezcatlipoca) wear feathered masks to hide their identity behind the face of the god while they are performing duties in his name or enacting rituals.

(and, likely, by his family) to intervene and speak to the bride on his behalf. The *cibuatlanque* then request permission from the girl's family for the marriage to take place, and bring gifts from the groom to the bride and to her parents. Traditionally, the first time they visit the family, the bride's parents deny consent, to force the groom to prove that he is serious enough to continue asking. Three days later, the *cibuatlanque* visit again, once more bringing gifts, and the bride's family formally grants permission for the marriage.

The Ceremony

The afternoon of the wedding, the bride participates in a ritual bath and is tended by her female relatives. She has her arms and legs decorated with red feathers, and her face is painted with yellow pigment. The boy's family arrives and gives a final gift to the bride. The women of the groom's family adopt the girl, telling her that they are happy to have her as a part of their family. They then guide her to her husband and her new home. The entire family walks through the streets, carrying torches and singing the entire way.

When they arrive, the bride is handed a lit piece of incense. The groom welcomes his bride at the door holding another incense stick. They exchange their incense as a symbol of respect. The two then enter singing and dancing into their new home. Once inside, the women of the *cibuatlanque* tie their hands together. They are formally declared man and wife, and, of course, another bountiful feast is given to celebrate such a fortunate event.

War

War is essential to Aztec culture, both as a means of procuring slaves and in order to spread the power of their empire. The Aztecs are convinced of their superiority of intellect and will challenge any other tribe if their leaders believe the Gods wish it. Further, they have a vested interest in gathering prisoners from their enemies in order to sacrifice them to the Sun God, Huitzilopochtli. These sacrifices are necessary on a daily basis, and therefore, the Aztecs must continually be at war.

When the Aztecs decide to conquer a particular city, they first ask the priests of Huitzilopochtli to divine the future

to determine if Huitzilopochtli supports their attack. Once the God's approval is obtained, the Emperor of the Aztecs sends out ambassadors from Tenochtitlan to offer the enemy city "protection" from the god's wrath similar to those made by American mobsters engaged in racketeering centuries later. They first attempt to conquer the city without bloodshed, pointing out the advantages of taking the city into the Empire, increasing its trade and adopting the people of the foreign city as Aztec citizens. All that the Aztec Empire requests from such converts is a small gift of gold or precious stones for the Emperor and 2,000 slaves for Huitzilopochtli's temple sacrifices. Typically, a foreign city is given 20 days – one month, by the Aztec calendar – to consider the "request."

If the city refuses, more ambassadors are sent. This time, they offer no respite or mercy and speak less of the advantages of joining the Aztecs and more about the destruction of any city that does not submit to the

Emperor's will. Polite talk is replaced by bloodcurdling threats. Their coercion often includes stories of the

complete destruction of the city's temples, enslavement of a majority of the population, and a promise that crippling tribute will be demanded for many years to come.

If the city still refuses to join the Aztec Empire, war begins. Messengers are dispatched throughout the Empire. Warriors are gathered, and the armies of the Aztec cities send their troops to join in the fray. On the day chosen

by Huitzilopochtli's High Priest

as the most fortunate, the great war drum booms out over Tenochtitlan. A huge force then sets out, complete with priests, women cooks, porters, and engineers. The soldiers from each city march in separate groups, identified by their banners.

Once the army arrives at the enemy city, Jaguar Knights spy it out. Their task is to scout enemy encampments and assassinate the generals of unsuspecting enemy troops. The Jaguar Knights are elite warriors of the God of Trickery, Tezcatlipoca. They infiltrate the enemy, signaling to each other with bird calls, flashing mirrors, and other means.

Once the city is in a state of chaos, if possible, the Eagle



Knights prepare for their attack. The Eagle Knights are the elite warriors of Huitzilopochtli, and they usually attack at dawn beneath their god's watchful eye. The Eagle Knights announce their attack by making a great noise — stamping their feet, chanting, and whistling loudly to intimidate and frighten the foe. While the Eagle Knights draw attention and engage the opposing army, the Jaguar Knights encircle their enemy and assault from within the city. The plan is to capture the city, killing as few people as possible. Although the Aztec fighting style is very fierce, their warriors prefer to wound and capture their enemies for sacrifice rather than kill them outright on the battlefield.

Once the enemy surrenders or is rendered incapable of fighting, a peace treaty is drawn up, which lists the amount of tribute that the conquered city is expected to pay (in goods and slaves) per year. The city is governed by an Aztec noble whose main job is to convert the city's loyalty through fear. Prisoners of war and tribute — men, women, and children — are taken back to Tenochtitlan to be sacrificed.

A Warrior's Rewards

An Aztec boy retains a telltale tuft of hair combed forward over his forehead until he participates in the capture of a prisoner. His first experience on the battlefield is limited to carrying a warrior's shield and observing the action, but his second requires that he participate with as many as five of

his fellow novices. Their main task: to take alive a foe for sacrifice at the sacred temples. If they are successful, they will be considered men. The captive is taken to the priests, and the boys may be allowed to assist in the sacrifice of their first victim.

Traditionally, this is a major event in the lives of young men. The body of the prisoner is divided among the boys for ritualistic consumption: the right thigh and torso go to the youngster who behaves most heroically; the left thigh goes to the second bravest youth; the right upper arm to the third, and so on.

Education

The Aztecs are especially interested in education and take great care to see that every generation is carefully taught science, history, and religion. Both boys and girls of noble birth are educated from childhood, while only boys of the commoner class are allowed to go to school. Children of slaves are not taught at all unless they can pay for their education (which is extremely rare).

During the first years of an Aztec child's life, fathers educate boys while mothers are responsible for the girls. Once family education is over, around age 6, the children of nobles go to the *calmecac* school, and all others attend the more public *tepoacalli*. Boys and girls go to the same school but are taught separately. In school, children learn history, myths, religion, and Aztec ceremonial songs. Boys receive intensive military and weapons training and also learn about agriculture and trades. Girls are educated in caring for a family, taking care of a home's basic finances (based on bartering), and are trained in arts that will help them ensure the welfare of their future families.

The *calmecac* also teaches young noblemen how to be leaders and instructs them in political and military history. They are trained to occupy high posts, and those who show potential are apprenticed to the priesthood to see if the gods favor them. These advantaged children are taught many different arts and are educated in higher sciences such as astronomy and medicine. They are also taught writing — a skill that the common-born are not given — and can interpret and create the various hieroglyphs that comprise the written language of Nahuatl.

In the *calmecac*, noble-born children are also taught formal Aztec mathematics, which use a base-20 system rather than base-10. The numbers 1-19 are expressed by a system of Braille-like dots; the number 20 is represented by a flag. Mathematics is a complex art, and not taught lightly. Commoners with an understanding of numbers are rare indeed.

Weaponry

The Aztecs possess many unusual weapons and specialize in the use of blunt and capturing devices (such as clubs and nets) for the purposes of capturing their enemies alive so that they may be sacrificed. One such weapon is a wooden club edged with sharp pieces of obsidian. It is called a *macuahuatl*, and it is specifically designed to disable an opponent without killing. Aztecs also use bows and arrows as well as long and short spears. A device called an *atlatl* increases the range and force of thrown spears.

Aztec Writing

Aztec writing, including their number system, is primarily glyphic and very complex. This helps when dealing with the outer cities of the Empire because not all Aztec-ruled lands speak Nahuatl. Colorfully painted screen-fold papers are the only common carrier of writing. A book (called a codex) is very rare indeed. Only the wealthy can afford to own them, and only priests use them on a daily basis to record astrological signs and religious events.

Standardization and convention allows Nahuatl to be intelligible in all parts of the Empire. There is a phonetic element in Aztec writing, and every word in the spoken language has a sound as well as a meaning. The written glyphs sometimes express the sound of a similar word, rather than the exact replication that is painted. Thus, a drawing of an eye may be a true picture (meaning the eye as part of the body), or it might reflect the sound of another word (meaning "I"). Or, the picture might be a condensed version of an entire sentence – "eye" as a command meaning "use sight and vision to find your way in this place."

These symbols are not placed in sequence, but form a larger scene like a picture. Each element in the scene is part of the overall message, translated by the author of the mural. The designer places each piece within the whole to create an elaborate metaphysical design. In such a scene, many things can be happening at once. Reading these hieroglyphics takes a keen eye and a complete understanding of each element and pictogram. Even so, it can be difficult to decipher the true meaning of Aztec messages. Many scribes use this confusion to hide alternate messages within the larger design. The mural must be deciphered like a puzzle in which the glyphs provide intricate and occasionally hidden clues.

The lower part of the picture generally represents the ground while the upper is the sky. Distance is shown by placing the furthest figures at the top of the page and the nearest at the bottom. Relative importance is indicated by size: a victorious king is drawn larger than his defeated enemy. All figures are in profile, with no three-quarter views or fore-shortening. The painter assumes that the person examining the picture is familiar with insignias of rank, costumes appropriate to various social classes, and the iconography and legendary visages of all the Aztec Gods. A priest is always depicted with his face painted black, his hair long, and his hands stained red from blood-letting. He can thus be recognized as a priest even when dressed in plain garb. Similar accoutrements show the rank and background of each figure in the scene, revealing the identities of all people involved despite their current activity.

Aztec Clothing

Due the warm climate of the Mexica Valley, the Aztecs wear very little clothing. Their small garb is loose and flowing. Men use cloth skirts around the hip area and a cloak over one shoulder during colder nights or for travel. Men from the noble classes wear more expensive and highly decorated fabrics. They may paint their faces with green, red, or yellow circles, greasing their hair and wearing feathered headdresses for more formal events.

Women wear brightly colored, wraparound skirts that end just below the knee. For blouses, they wear over-tunics that are brightly embroidered and fringed. Married women wind their hair into multiple braids, weaving them around their heads and leaving the ends out to give the impression of a pair of horns. On special days, the women wear beautiful *huipiles* – sleeveless blouses with ornate necklines worn over skirts.

In general, nobles wear cotton with much decoration. Commoners and slaves wear clothing made from linen and other fibers. Gold and jade are the main jewels worn for decoration. Both men and women wear earrings and nose rings, and more wealthy nobles occasionally pierce their lower lips or other body parts.

The Codex

Priests are expected to have a very good grasp of the written language since it is their responsibility to record conquests, sacrifices, and tribute. They also design the great murals that decorate city walls, recording the events of the year as well as honoring the gods with representative figures. Priests use such books to keep track of the significant events of each passing year, recording dreams, illusions, superstitions, and omens that are witnessed by the priestly class.

Each book, or codex, consists of a strip, anything up to 13 yards in length and some six to seven inches high, made of paper, cloth, or deerskin. This paper is folded in zigzag fashion so that wherever the user opens it he or she can clearly see two pages of the manuscript. To read the writing,

Mexica at a Glance

Ruler: Tezozomoc, Emperor of the Aztec, descendant of Quetzalcoatl

Area: 510,000 sq mi (*Land:* 498,000 sq mi, *Water:* 12,000 sq mi)

Population: approximately 1,425,000

Climate: Varies from tropical to desert. The region is distinctly seasonal. In most areas, there are swings of extreme from dry, hot summers to cold, snowy winters, and everything in between. Rainfall is high, and the land is often marshy and humid. There are tsunamis along the western coast, volcanoes and destructive earthquakes in the center and south, and hurricanes on the eastern coast.

Terrain: The terrain of Mexica ranges from high, rugged mountains to low coastal plains. Additionally, there are high plateaus, desert, and jungles.

Natural resources: Petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber

Land use: *Arable Land:* 12%, *Permanent Crops:* 1%, *Permanent Pastures:* 39%, *Forests and Woodland:* 26%, *Other:* 22%

Capital: Tenochtitlan, 220,000

Largest cities: Oaxaca, 102,000; Cholula, 65,000

Monetary unit: The Aztecs do not use coins. They trade with a monetary standard of cacao beans (chocolate beans) and quills filled with gold dust. These items are recognized as having a stable general value throughout Mexica, and the country also has an active barter economy.

Languages: Nahuatl (although only nobles are taught to write the language), Huavean (A primitive dialect used by the uneducated)

Religions: Aztec Polytheism

Agriculture: Corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes, poultry, wood products

make effective use of the limited space, and individual pages are divided into sections with red or black lines. The ends of the strip are glued to thin plaques of wood which serve as covers, which are often decorated with paintings or sewn with small discs of turquoise.

Dancing

Music and dance are a significant part of Aztec life. They are closely linked to religion, and are an integral element in the celebration of holy days. Everyone takes part in public dances performed for the gods, from noble to commoner to slave. Many of the holy dances are more like plays, in which the central dancers describe something from the past or act out scenes of popular legend.

The dancers, as many as 1,000 to 5,000 people, gather in the central plaza of the city or village. First, they create three large circles, moving to the music without a patterned form and simply enjoying themselves. Soon, the priests arrive within the square and begin to lead a more formal dance. The Aztecs spend hours making intricate and precise groups all moving in harmony. All Aztecs are familiar with the basic movements and patterns of the formal dances used on high holidays. The performers are usually commoners, but nobles are encouraged to take part as well.

Sometimes, these large gatherings will be interrupted for smaller, professional troupes performing specific plays, ritual dances, or more difficult and spectacular stunts. The movements performed have a highly religious meaning, and it is important to execute every step with precision. One such is the spectacular Dance of the Falling Sun, in which the artists climb a high pole or mast and tie themselves to long cords wound around the pole. During the performance, these acrobats jump off the pole. The cords unwind, swirling them in circles in imitation of sacred birds.

The most common instruments at such dances are rattles, whistles, trumpets, flutes, copper bells, and shells. An Aztec "orchestra" is usually made of different types of rattles and multiple drums. Aztec children between ages 12 and 15 are taught to dance, sing, and play musical instruments. The trumpet sounds long, deep notes designed to imitate the voices of the gods. The percussion creates hypnotic rhythms, and is intended to replicate the sounds of the Thirteen Heavens or of the stars moving above the earth. The big temple drums, used only in times of war, can be heard for several miles.

the strip is scanned from left to right. A typical codex is read from top to bottom, but in some codices the arrangement is zigzag or even goes around the page in elaborate spirals. Both sides of the paper strip are covered with writing in order to

Part 2: The Empire of the Dying Sun



The lands of Mexico are tremendously varied, ranging from wide deserts and salty ocean marshes to high mountains and active volcanoes. The Aztecs control most of Mexico, raising enormous cities such as Tenochtitlan and

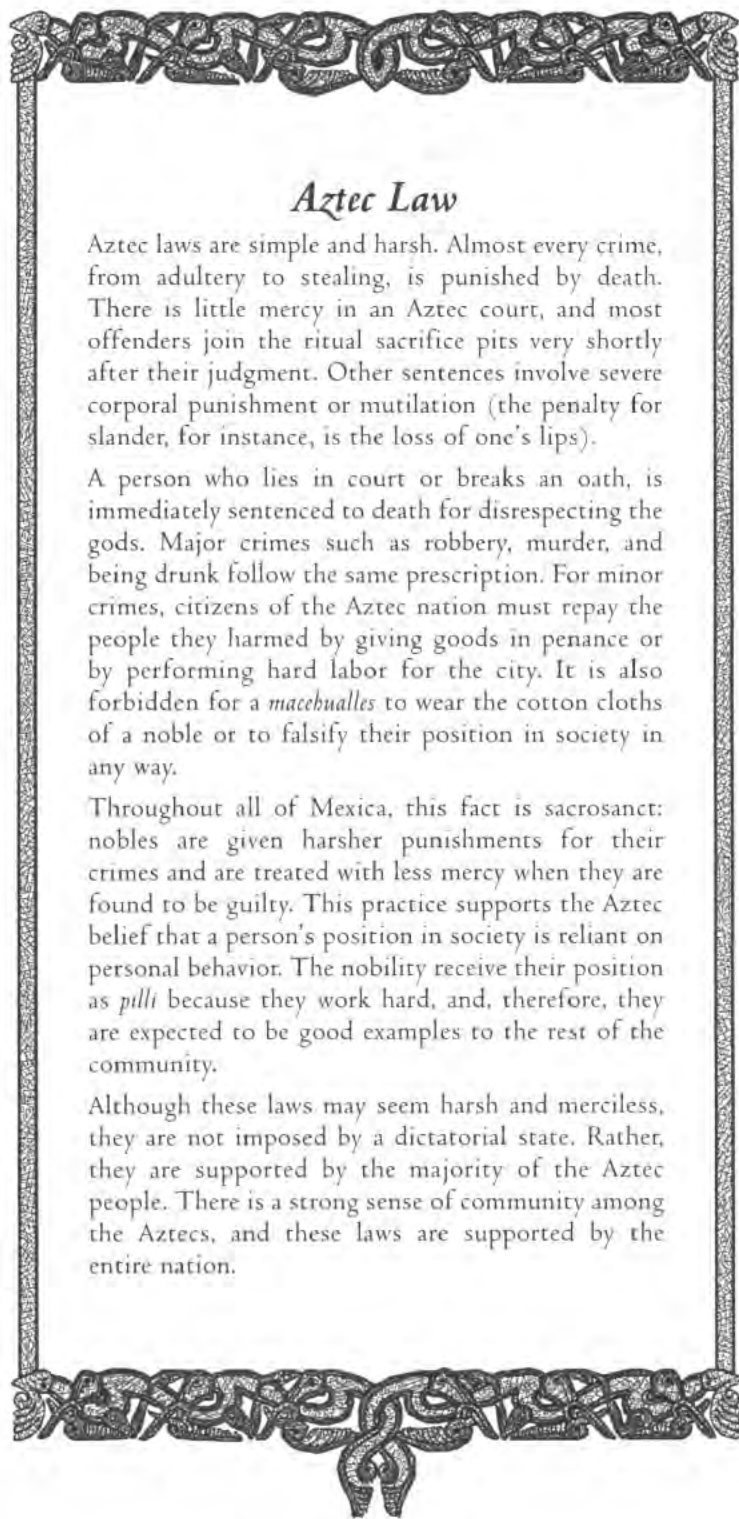
Oaxaca and building ceremonial sites to appease their vigilant and powerful gods.

The ancient Emperors walked these plains and gave orders that the Aztec nation should expand and conquer, seeking out the native inhabitants and unifying them beneath the reign of the Sun God, Huitzilopochtli. Cities shine with gold, and the sacrifices of the priests bring prosperity and peace to their people. However, the Aztecs are a warrior race, and they are not content with concord. Armies gather and prepare to invade the borders of nearby enemy nations at any sign of weakness. They are constantly ready to attack, usurping yet more land and gathering more slaves. Better that blood offered to the gods comes from the ranks of other, less civilized races than from their own people. Thus, this is a land that is constantly upturned in war and thrives on the blood of sacrifice.

These are the People of the Sun. Entering their demesne is fraught with peril; Aztec warriors have no mercy and no code of honor other than the eternal vigilance demanded by Huitzilopochtli and the other gods of their people. Still, despite their barbarism, the term "Toltec," is used to describe all the peoples of Mexico, and they try to live up to high standards of behavior. In the Nahuatl language, "Toltec" means "to be admirable, noble, to have a brave heart." The quest of the Aztec people – to save the world from darkness and destruction – can only be described as selfless and noble. Yet their methods – the ritual sacrifice of hundreds of thousands – turn the stomachs of their enemies.

History

In the beginning, the world was not blood and fire but darkness and loneliness. The mother of the Aztec people, the first of the gods, was Coatlique, the Lady of the Skirt of Snakes. Her image is that of a ferocious warrior – a tall woman with weapons in her hands. She is decorated with skulls and snakes, and her hands bleed upon the ground around her. This sacrifice of her own blood feeds the earth and causes life to grow. There are no wounds on her body



Aztec Law

Aztec laws are simple and harsh. Almost every crime, from adultery to stealing, is punished by death. There is little mercy in an Aztec court, and most offenders join the ritual sacrifice pits very shortly after their judgment. Other sentences involve severe corporal punishment or mutilation (the penalty for slander, for instance, is the loss of one's lips).

A person who lies in court or breaks an oath, is immediately sentenced to death for disrespecting the gods. Major crimes such as robbery, murder, and being drunk follow the same prescription. For minor crimes, citizens of the Aztec nation must repay the people they harmed by giving goods in penance or by performing hard labor for the city. It is also forbidden for a *macehualles* to wear the cotton cloths of a noble or to falsify their position in society in any way.

Throughout all of Mexico, this fact is sacrosanct: nobles are given harsher punishments for their crimes and are treated with less mercy when they are found to be guilty. This practice supports the Aztec belief that a person's position in society is reliant on personal behavior. The nobility receive their position as *pilli* because they work hard, and, therefore, they are expected to be good examples to the rest of the community.

Although these laws may seem harsh and merciless, they are not imposed by a dictatorial state. Rather, they are supported by the majority of the Aztec people. There is a strong sense of community among the Aztecs, and these laws are supported by the entire nation.

other than the openings in her hands, and she is perfectly formed. Her features are square, immobile, without even a hint of human expression or emotion. She is beyond such insignificant things.

Coatlique impregnated herself, using an obsidian knife as the father of her children. She gave birth to Coyolxauhqui, goddess of the moon, and to a group of male and female offspring who became the stars. Thereafter, Coatlique found

a ball of feathers, which she tucked into her bosom. When she looked for it later, it was gone, and she was pregnant once more. Her children, the moon and stars, did not believe her story. Ashamed of their mother, they resolved to kill her. They feared that her second children would drive them from the skies and steal their power.

Coatlique wept as the children came to kill her and, in her fury and sorrow, gave birth. In an instant Huitzilopochtli sprang fully grown and fully armed from her body. He carried a shield and spears the color of turquoise. To defend his mother, Huitzilopochtli attacked his sister and cut her

body into pieces. With the help of a fire serpent who birthed the Four Suns that would follow him into the sky, Huitzilopochtli destroyed his brothers and sisters among the stars, murdering them in a rage. He threw Coyolxauhqui's body into a deep gorge beneath a mountain, where it lies forever. Only her severed head remains in the heavens, illuminating the darkness of the night.

At the death of her first-born children, Mother Coatlique wept and mourned. As she did so, the heavens literally crumbled to pieces. The earth mother fell to the ground below, and in her rage and bitterness, she caused her children to be torn apart. The stars were scattered and spread throughout the skies, and Huitzilopochtli was separated from them by the vastness of day and night. This way, Huitzilopochtli could not harm his other siblings.

Government

Aztec government is a democracy, balanced between the power of the unified clans and tribes within the entire nation and the ruler of Tenochtitlan. Because the latter is the descendant of the gods, his power as Emperor is absolute and cannot be questioned by the democratic whole. However, he does not appoint his lessers. The provincial governors that rule each of the territories and cities in Mexico are elected and must serve both their people and their Emperor.

Each clan elects its own officials to rule and guide their territory within the Aztec nation. That ruler appoints his own staff of priests, financiers, and generals to supply both secular and religious leadership. The rulers of each smaller territory do not have to be "of noble blood" so long as they are duly elected by the people. However, he must be a free man and not a slave. Once in place, the ruler will serve his position until his death or until he is proved unfit to rule (through age, injury, or other means) and must be replaced.

On the local level, politics are structured very simply. The smallest social unit of government is the *calpulli*, or group of tribal elders and leaders. A *calpulli* is responsible for a small group of tribes, a city, or an area of land. There are twenty *calpulli* within the lands of Mexico. These councils meet once every twenty days to discuss local problems and create solutions, offering their advice and experience to one another. The *calpulli*'s primary duty is to elect the two officials that will directly lead, guide, and rule their people. These important officials are known as the *Tecbuhli* and the *Teachcautin*.

The *Tecbuhli* is responsible for the military needs of his territory and for coordinating his warriors with the armies

Social Classes

The Aztecs have three clearly differentiated social classes. At the bottom of the scale are slaves. The children of poor parents are often sold, although such servitude only lasts a set period of time and is more like indentured servitude than actual slavery. In many cases, slaves can buy back their freedom if they acquire enough money. Another law states that slaves that escape and reach the royal palace without being caught are to be given their freedom instantly as a reward for their courage and bravery.

The second classification within Aztec social strata is the *macehualles*, or commoners. These people are responsible for the majority of society's tasks, from farming and mining to simple city labor. They are often uneducated and are expected to obey orders from their superiors without question. The majority of commoners are given lifetime ownership of an area of land and have civil rights within society. The lowest groups of commoners, barely better than freed slaves, are not allowed to own property. They subsist as tenant farmers and work for the landed as hirelings. A *macehualles* is not allowed to become a priest without first ascending to the noble class.

At the top of Aztec society are the *pilli*, or nobility. These are men who gain their position in society through many means; an Aztec can rise into the *pilli* by virtue of great skill and bravery in war. They are wealthy men, those who are given some say in the government of their area. They are also allowed to become priests and are educated by the clergy.

of the entire Aztec nation. He must, by law, be a soldier who has served and been bloodied in battle, and he must be well known for his bravery and ability to lead. The *Techubtli* is responsible for increasing the Aztec armies and their lands as well as capturing thousands of slaves per year for the sacrifices of his local temples and the yearly slave tithe to the Pyramid of the Sun.

The other more powerful official is the *Teachcautin*, who serves for life and sees to the civic needs of society. The *Teachcautin* is in charge of administration, law and order, civic works such as roads and bridges, and the distribution of lands and produce. In many cases, the *Teachcautin* is a priest or a powerful sorcerer. However, if he is a priest, he knows that his duties to the Aztec gods are subservient to his position in the province. He is rarely the most powerful of priests in his city (since he is chosen for his skill at politics and not his passion for faith), but his power – both politically and personally – is significant.

The *Teachcautin* is considered to be the head of the local *calpulli* council and is its representative in the next level of government, the *tlatocan* – a large meeting of all *Teachcautin* in Mexico, which reports directly to the Emperor. This body of government passes laws and interprets judgments over all the cities of Mexico, ensuring that the country is unified and evenly structured. The Emperor appoints four permanent officials from the *tlatocan*. Two are in charge of national-level judicial affairs, one is the Emperor's executioner, and the fourth is a liaison between the community's civil and military establishments. The four major officers also serve as the Emperor's counselors and personal advisors.

In recent years, social conditions and the government are changing. Social classes are becoming more rigid and being given increased privileges and rights distinguished by power, prestige, or lineage. Under the reign of the current Emperor, Tezozomoc, Aztec culture is becoming far more autocratic than democratic. More and more officials at every level are appointed rather than elected, and many of the *calpulli* councils are being permanently disbanded in favor of a singular, ruling *Teachcautin* position that is established by lineage. It is a change that will alter the face of Mexico and change the country's future forever.

Tenochtitlan

Tenochtitlan is easily the most impressive city in the Empire, and justly serves as its capital.

Temples of Tenochtitlan

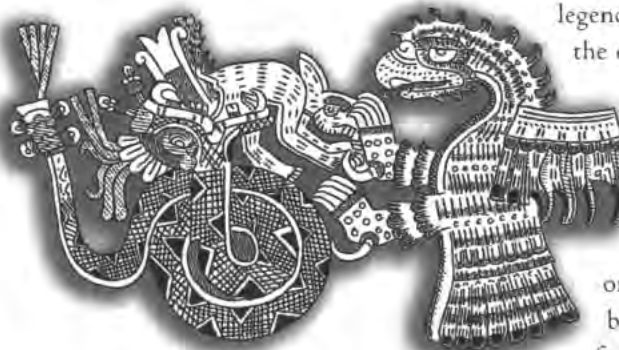
The temples of the city of Tenochtitlan are very fine and large, covered in mosaics and bright colors and, in some places, painted with gold. All of them are magnificent and attended by more than 100 priests. They are the central heart of the city, and the Emperor prays at the temple of Huitzilopochtli every morning at dawn. The temples are built upon high, tiered stone platforms that carry their apex more than 100 feet above the ground – well above the rest of the city.

They are so large that within the main body of the building, a town of several hundred inhabitants could easily be built. There is a wall that surrounds the temples, protecting them and keeping their sacred grounds inviolate. All around this wall are very elegant towers with very large rooms and corridors where the priests of the city live. There are nearly 40 towers about the center of town, all of which are so high that it requires more than fifty stone steps to achieve the topmost level – more than three-fourths the height of the main temples.

History

The Aztecs marched from the Isle of Herons in the far north. Their loyalty to their god-king was unquestioned, and they followed the command of an ancient prophecy. They conquered and enslaved their enemies as they crossed the peninsula of Mexico searching for their destined home. Those who stood against them died, and no warriors of the continent could withstand their ferocity. But always, they moved on, propelled by their priests and a legend that guided their footsteps to the end.

The Aztecs wandered through the continent until at last, on a small island in the center of Lake Texcoco, their leader, the ancient Emperor Quetzalcoatl, ordered them to lay down their burdens and rest. At last they had found their home. Upon the island



in the center of the great lake, the city of Tenochtitlan was founded, and the Aztec people were born.

Founding

The city of Tenochtitlan is named for the legend of its founding. Huitzilopochtli told them in their travels that they would build their home and his temple at the site where they saw an eagle perched on a cactus while devouring a serpent. The city's name – drawn from "tetl," which means "rock," "nochtli," meaning "cactus," and "tlan," which is the suffix used to designate a city – remembers the day when they saw the eagle and the serpent, and first laid eyes upon their people's new home. The city itself is steeped in such myths, and the gods seem almost omnipresent upon every wall and sculpture of the ancient buildings. The city is revered, and the Emperor who rules it is seated upon the Throne of the Sun, the place where



Huitzilopochtli made the prophecy of the Aztec people come true by granting them a home.

A system of shallow basins forms the floor of the mountain plateau known as the Valley of Mexico. The city of Tenochtitlan stands on an island in a bay of Lake Texcoco at the heart of this valley. South of this area is a subdivision known as the Xochimilco-Chalco Basin, the bottom of which is comprised of approximately 520 square miles of flats, farmland, and small villages. A continuous tract of marshes, swamps, and lagoons extends along the basin floor, and it must be constantly tilled and maintained in order to provide suitable dry land for building and living. However, this makes the valley very rich in agriculture, with plenty of water and good soil for growing crops. The lake is suitable for fishing, and a great deal of the city's food supply comes from fish, aquatic birds, and other living resources that surround the city.

The city itself is built on an island in the center of a tremendous salt lake, with wide bridges and rafts designed to carry visitors from one area of the spreading city to another. Like a skirt, the marsh wreathes the tremendous buildings in salty waves. Much of the city is built on high platforms over the water, and the width of the lake is such that it is six miles from the main road to the edge of the city proper. Rafts and boats carry visitors back and forth to the mainland. There are four artificial causeways leading to it, each as wide as 20 people abreast and built on massive arches of stone.

The main streets of Tenochtitlan are wide and straight; some of these are on the land, but the rest are half on dry land and half within the watery canals. Canoes carry travelers through the latter as if down roads, passing near to buildings, stores, and street-fronts. All the streets have openings in places so that the water may pass from one canal to another. Over all these arcs are wide bridges made of

Building the City

In the beginning stages of Tenochtitlan development, Aztec life was very difficult. The city was being built on a small island in the center of a bitter lake, and the sweltering marsh that surrounded the area seemed almost impenetrable. Many workers died simply trying to carry building materials to the island, and more were killed for refusing to continue with their work. This was a difficult time for the Aztec nation – a time when the entire future of their people was at stake. The Aztecs must work constantly to maintain a city on swampy land.

There was also continuing tension between the Aztecs and the neighboring tribes of the mainland. Battles were frequent, and many warriors died protecting the city. Despite these obstacles, the Aztecs worked hard to improve the quality of their lives. As the Aztec empire expanded, specialized craftsmen and common laborers were brought to Tenochtitlan to expand the city. Large wooden stakes were driven into the soft ground to provide secure foundations for the new buildings. Despite these precautions, the larger temples and palaces would often sink below ground level. Because of this, the older buildings are continuously repaired or rebuilt with newer structures redesigned over the older core.

carved stone, which are extremely well made, and very solid, standing as they are on thick pillars that extend down into the depths of Lake Texcoco.

The city itself is laid out in a very regular, planned manner. There is an even grid of avenues and canals dissecting the city into sectors and smaller areas, and every building has ample space and access from multiple directions. The city itself is arranged into five sections, coinciding with the five directions recognized by the Mexica (north, south, east, west, and center). Major temples mark each of the cardinal directions, one to each of the primary gods. The central temple is to Huitzilopochtli and is the largest and most important temple in the city. The other four major temples are dedicated to

Quetzalcoatl, Tlaloc, Tezcatlipoca and Mictlantecuhtli, respectively.

Artificial islands, known as *chinampas*, are constructed of layers of mud and vegetation within the shallow fresh-water lakes. The

Aztecs have converted a large bay of saline Lake Texcoco into a freshwater lake by a system of sluiced dikes and spring-fed aqueducts and covered it with *chinampas* suitable for building, farming, or other activities. The rich, organic soil and readily available moisture, combined with techniques of fertilization and the use of seedbeds, has transformed the lake of Tenochtitlan into a major agricultural resource. The combination of *chinampa* agriculture, canal and floodwater irrigation, and terracing supports the densest population in Mexico, and is a tribute to the highly advanced engineering and architectural skills of the Aztecs. The city of Tenochtitlan is unlike any other in the world and is magnificent to behold.

The lakeside settlements around Tenochtitlan are numerous, but the majority of *chinampa* tillers, peasants and working-class *macehualles* live in the middle of the swamps rather than on

the mainland. The city is primarily for the warriors and members of the noble *pilli* class. Numerous settlements of *macehualles* workers are linked to the mainland by a system of causeways. Island towns and small villages dot the landscape, and farmsteads set on artificial foundations lie spread out amid the *chinampa* plots. Tenochtitlan is not simply a city of stone buildings and causeways, it is also a floating city of grasses, grains, and other farm supplies arranged within the center of the massive Lake Texcoco like a hovering flight of birds resting for a while amid the waters of the lake.

Throne of the Sun

The Throne of the Sun is the formal name for Quetzalpapalotl Palace. It lies immediately to the southwest of the Moon Plaza and the Pyramid of the Moon. The Moon Plaza is one of the main ritual precincts of the city and is used for formal dances on high holidays. From his throne in the palace, the Emperor can look out over the plaza and watch his city as it lives and breathes. Emperor Tezozomoc is a ruthless genius whose skill at political and martial intrigue unified and organized the society of the Aztecs into a formal nation. His advisor, Nexahcoatl, is a skilled architect and very capable of the organization and building required to keep Tenochtitlan running. Their leadership makes the Aztec nation strong, and together they have added several hundred square miles and numerous tribes to the Empire. Tezozomoc organizes national affairs, gathering the wisdom of his *Teachcautin* and ruling them with an iron fist.

The Throne of the Sun is a tall palace, built in a style similar to that of the grand pyramids that dot the Valley of Mexico. It stands some 60 feet high, and the stairs are painted with gold. They shine in the light of the sun like a beacon, reminding the city and the nation that the Emperor



Tecpatl (Defenders of the Moon)

Size:	Medium Undead
HD:	7d12+3 (48 hp)
Initiative:	+0
Speed:	20 feet
AC:	18 (+8 Natural)
Attacks:	Slam +7 melee (1d6+4 and Insanity Rot)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 5 feet
Special Attacks:	Despair, Insanity Rot
Special Qualities:	Damage Reduction 5/+2, Darkvision 60 feet, Resistant to Blows, Undead Subtype
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +7
Abilities:	Str 18, Dex 10, Con —, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills:	Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Search +5, Sense Motive +4, Spot +13
Feats:	Alertness, Toughness
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate Underground
Organization:	Solitary, Pair, or Mob (1-10)
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always Lawful Evil
Advancement:	8-14 HD (Medium), 13-20 HD (Large)

The Tecpatl, also known as the Defenders of the Pyramid of the Moon, are a special type of mummy created by the magic of the Aztec priests. These creatures lie in a state of torpor, unmoving and silent, until the temple is disturbed (or an unconsecrated individual steps over the threshold of the Pyramid of the Moon's inner chambers).

Tecpatl (Defenders of the Moon)

(cont.)

A Tecpatl is created and commanded by the priests of the Aztec religion and is a powerful deterrent to those who would raid tombs or assault holy sites. Unlike mummies from the standard game, the Tecpatl do not wear bandages, and they are not particularly affected by fire. Their bodies are sunken but whole and athletic. Their skin is pale and translucent, revealing their (unmoving) inner organs. On the forehead of a Tecpatl is tattooed the symbol of a black crescent moon.

In melee combat, a Tecpatl delivers a powerful blow. Even if it had no other abilities, its great strength and grim determination would make it a formidable opponent. Further, it is a cunning fighter, capable of using any and all human tactics against its enemies. It is completely loyal to its priestly creators, and no spell or spell effect can cause it to turn against them in any way.

Despair (Su): At the mere sight of a Tecpatl, the viewer must succeed at a Will Save (DC 16) or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the Save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that Tecpatl's Despair ability for one day.

Insanity Rot (Su): Supernatural Disease – Slam; Fortitude Save (DC 20); Incubation Period 1 day; Damage 1d6 Temporary Intelligence. Insanity rot is a powerful virus that disintegrates the brain within the very skull of a living being. The brain congeals and turns to mush, shutting down all functions within weeks of contracting the disease. Unlike normal diseases, insanity rot continues until the victim reaches Intelligence 0 and becomes a gibbering, mindless vegetable, or receives a Remove Disease spell or similar magic.

Resistant to blows (Ex): Physical attacks deal only half damage to Tecpatl. Apply this effect before Damage Reduction.

is no less than a god himself. It is only appropriate that such a man walk on the rays of the sun when he descends to meet his people.

The palace is a tremendous building, capable of holding more than 3,000 within its main confines, and with enough ground inside the primary wall to maintain an entire village. There is a dungeon (rarely used for more than a night, since those unlucky enough to be sentenced there are simply being held for the morning's ritual sacrifices), and a series of high towers which look out over the city and Lake Texcoco. Rooms within the palace, and even the walkways outside the main building, are raised on high platforms of stone and wood. Servants and artisans live in attached buildings, created like wings to either side of the main palace.

Pyramid of the Sun

The Pyramid of the Sun is one of the most impressive buildings in the Mexica Valley. It stands outside the city of Tenochtitlan and provides a beacon to all travelers. Its red-painted walls shine like bloody canvases under the sun's brilliant light, contrasting with the pale earth that surrounds it. Here, the rituals to Huitzilopochtli are performed, and thousands of prisoners are sacrificed each year so that the sun will continue to rise.

The Pyramid of the Sun was built concurrently with Tenochtitlan but was finished before the majority of other city buildings were completed. It became the spiritual and religious heart of the Mexica Valley, and, even with the additions of the fine temples within the city proper, it remains the mystic and spiritual hub of the Aztec religion. Together with its spiritual partner, the Pyramid of the Moon, it functions as the center of all religious organization within the Empire.

The Pyramid of the Sun is a tall, four-tiered, stepped pyramid with a temple on the top and many rooms carved within the structure. The interior rooms serve to house prisoners for ritual sacrifice and to provide housing and ritual chambers for the High Priests of Huitzilopochtli. The main stairway stands on the north side of the solemn structure, carved with frescoes and tiled with elaborate mosaics of the gods and the legends of the Five Suns. The pyramid itself is over 700 feet to a side, 200 feet high, and the tiers are formed of a succession of levels built one on top of the other over the centuries. The pyramids and many other structures at Teotihuacan are stepped rather than smooth, and the stones are finely cut and expertly placed.

The priests who serve in the Pyramid of the Sun have a panoramic view of the urban complex that is Tenochtitlan. Westward is the long plaza that stretches from the massive

Two Styles of Pyramids

The Aztecs built two distinct kinds of temples, each of which is described below.

Twin-Stair Pyramids

Early Aztec pyramids follow a very distinct style that is repeated throughout their territories. These pyramids are very similar to those of other tribes in the area, notably the Mayans and the Incas. The Aztec twin-stair pyramids are typically taller, broader, and more stable than those built by their rivals. They also have a more elegant plaza below the front pillars and stairs. At the summit of the typical twin-stair pyramid, there are two highly ornamented temples and another double staircase. Traditionally, the two temples are dedicated to separate gods – often, they are dedicated as a pair to the dual deities Huitzilopochtli and Coatlique. Each temple is painted and tiled in the colors appropriate to the god to whom it is dedicated; for Huitzilopochtli, the temple is tiled in red and white, to honor the twin attributes of war and sacrifice. The pyramids atop the great mound are built extremely steeply, so that it is impossible to see the temple on top until reaching the pyramid's zenith. This is designed to signify that the gods are greater than the people on the Earth.

Round Pyramids

The second type of pyramid that is commonly built by the Aztecs to celebrate their gods is the round pyramid. These edifices are unique to the Aztecs and are not constructed by any of the other native peoples of the peninsula. Round pyramids are always dedicated to the ancient god-king, Quetzalcoatl, one of the most famous and revered figures in Aztec mythology. Quetzalcoatl is the god of wind and is seen most often as either a king or a feathered serpent. Because snakes of all sorts are sacred to him, his pyramids are elaborately tiled with images of feathered serpents. They are also given a rounded shape so they will not act as a barrier and hinder the wind god's entrance.

stairs in front of the Pyramid of the Sun, leading to the Avenue of the Dead, which stretches for miles north and south, linking the Pyramids of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon. The north end of the Avenue opens onto a large

General Appearance

The Aztecs are short and stocky; men rarely reach a height of more than 5'6" tall. Women are more delicately built, with an average height of about 4'8". A typical Aztec face is very broad with a prominent and often hooked nose. Their skin color varies from dark to light brown. Their eyes are black or brown and almond-shaped, and occasionally (but rarely) a child is born with amber eyes. Such children are considered to be favored of Huitzilopochtli.

An Aztec's hair is coarse, black, and straight. Men usually wear it cut in a fringe over the forehead, or they allow it to grow to the nape of the neck at the back. Depending on a person's place within Aztec culture, their hair will be styled in different manners. Warriors typically wear pigtails or a scalp lock, and boys who have not yet become a warrior wear a distinctive scalp lock that is combed over their foreheads. Priests wear their hair hanging long down their back with bones and beads braided into it. They occasionally color their hair, as well, tinting it to represent the colors of the god they serve. Aztec women let their hair grow long, and bind it into long, thick braids that are woven around the pate of their head so that they can work. On festival days, a woman's hair is often braided with ribbons and flowers.

Hair on the face is considered unclean and highly unattractive. Luckily, few Aztec men have the capability of growing thick beards. Their heritage endows them with a very meager amount of hair on their chins, and it is easy for an Aztec man to keep his face clean. Shaving is mostly unnecessary, and facial hair is more regularly plucked out with tweezers.

plaza in front of the Pyramid of the Moon and is usually filled with traders, soldiers, and citizens of Tenochtitlan.

Pyramid of the Moon

The Moon Pyramid is located at the northern end of the Avenue of the Dead and seems like a sober monument when compared to the brilliantly colored avenue and the flame-red walls of its brother temple, the Pyramid of the Sun. Facing south, it was built as the principal monument of the northern end of the temple complex. It has a five-tiered platform, attached to the front of the actual Pyramid

structure and is designed for large formal gatherings on holy days and important occasions. The Pyramid has many interior structures within it, but all are protected by an intricate series of secret passages and hidden catches. Where the Pyramid of the Sun is an open monument designed to lead people along the path of Huitzilopochtli's righteousness, the Pyramid of the Moon is a sealed place designed to preserve the sanctity and secrecy of the Aztec priesthood.

Internally, the Pyramid contains several private ritual chambers, and no housing other than that required to staff it at all hours. There are always priests on duty in the Pyramid of the Moon, praying and offering minor sacrifice to all of the Aztec gods (as opposed to the Pyramid of the Sun, which only offers sacrifice to Huitzilopochtli). There are also a number of burial chambers used for the consecration and final rest of extremely notable high priests, emperors, and other dignitaries. These bodies are mummified before they are placed within their stone tombs. Many of these mummies are enchanted, their souls bound to protect the pyramid against all intruders. If the Pyramid of the Moon is violated, the defenders of the temple will attack, screaming their vengeance and slaughtering those who dare walk upon this consecrated ground.

Avenue of the Dead

The Avenue of the Dead links the two religious structures, the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon, and serves as a central gathering point for all those outside the city. It is both a bazaar for selling wares and a religious site where prayers are offered to all Aztec gods in the shadows of the two great temples of the Aztec people.

The Avenue is a wide, cobbled road that is painted red and gold with ceramic glazes. It shines brightly beneath the feet of travelers and citizens alike and is almost always busy with common, everyday activity. There are numerous plazas along its length and tall statues of the gods and heroes of the Aztecs. The center of the Avenue is dominated by a carving of the goddess, Coatlique, the creator of the universe.

The Street of the Dead is lined with fine civic and religious buildings, like a small city just outside the complex of Tenochtitlan. Beyond these, there are masses of densely packed houses and housing complexes interspersed with courtyards and separated by winding streets. Villages dot the surrounding terrain, and the panoramic view is dominated by Lake Texcoco and the high, walled structure of Tenochtitlan.

Oaxaca

Oaxaca, the City of Legends, is one of the smallest in the Aztec Empire. It is surrounded by small villages based around a wide central plaza for trading, celebration, and gatherings. The temples are modest – not painted with gold but festooned with flowers and simple, primitive offerings. It is a peaceful city far from the ravages of war that fester on the borders of the Empire. It is rumored to be very near the site where the Moon goddess, Coyolxauhqui, fell from the sky, and her blood shines in the silver rivers.

Oaxaca derives its name from the Nahuatl words for “the place of the seed pods.” The mountain where it is built is covered with trees bearing them, and they are formed out of tears shed by Coatlique over her daughter, Coyolxauhqui.

The people of Oaxaca live in small settlements nestled among the pristine fertility of land and sea at the base of a tremendous mountain named Mount Alban. In their mountain enclaves and fertile valleys, the people plant corn, beans, and chocolate, as well as tomatoes, chiles, squash, pumpkins, and gourds.

The principal economic activities of the Oaxaca valley are agriculture, fishing, hunting, and mining. Mines near the city provide a great deal of rich ores, including gold and silver (the goddess’s bones) and are used to send valuable minerals through the Empire. The gold and silver from these mines are fashioned into exquisite adornments. Oaxaca craftsmen specialize in beautiful objects for decoration and for everyday use, and they craft them from alabaster, turquoise, jade, marble, and onyx.

Oaxaca is a peaceful haven, a respite from the bloodletting that marks the rest of the Empire. Few sacrifices are offered here, and the only temple to the sun god is a modest one that suffices primarily with blood gathered from animals rather than humans. Only on great holidays are humans sacrificed in Oaxaca, and even those are few. If there is an Earthly paradise, Oaxaca is not far from it. Game is plentiful, from the turkey-like *tepezcuintle* to jabalí, armadillo, and iguana. The fresh-water river yields varieties of marine life, as well as plentiful resources for the crops that grow widely in

the valley where the city is located. The plants are luxurious and rich, and Oaxaca is praised for its abundance and fertility.

The mathematicians of Oaxaca were the first to recognize and use the Aztec number system, and it is their ingenuity that found the number, zero, and created higher math. Their builders leveled a mountain top to erect the ceremonial center now called Monte Alban. They created the City of the Dead at the base of the mountain and built the great astronomical calendar that rests atop its carved slopes. The Aztec monoliths and pyramids owe their creation to the ingenuity of the Oaxacan people.



But this does not mean that Oaxaca is always peaceful. Being the site of great prosperity and growth only encourages evil and danger to crowd close, looking for opportunity. The Valley of Oaxaca is known for its strange creatures, and there are those who believe that all of the monsters that roam the Aztec world were born in the depths of the Cave of Legend at the far base of Mount Alban. There are many tales of the strange creatures that roam the valley and its environs, and, certainly, those travelers who move to and from the city often tell stories of beasts or beast-like men who attack them on the road at night. These creatures are bred and formed from the death of Coyolxauhqui and fed by the tears of Coatlique. They roam near Oaxaca, making its abundant plains and hills into a dangerous land of fearsome creatures.

The city of Oaxaca creates many exports, although they do not send caravans out through the dangerous forests often. Twice a year, a tithe caravan leaves Oaxaca for the capital of Tenochtitlan. The slaves of these caravans (the Aztecs have neither the wheel nor beasts of burden) are weighted down with expensive and rare materials, from the plumes of the legendary *quetzal*, to the carefully harvested shell of the *cochineal* (a tiny insect) whose body may be crushed to create a most precious red for dying wool. Only the citizens of Oaxaca have the knowledge to gather the small snails and milk them of their secretions, creating a unique and majestic purple dye. It is dangerous to gather these creatures, and

they are considered sacred (and must not be killed), so there is very little of this dye in the Aztec Empire, and it is highly prized.

Oaxaca is a wealthy city, and some who have never been there call it the City of Gold. Legends among the Mayans and other civilizations make Oaxaca out to be a city created of gold bricks, with streets lined by jewels and magnificent quetzal birds singing in every branch. Although these rumors are far-fetched, they cause as much damage to the city as any other enemy. Many fortune-hunters march to find Oaxaca in the belief that they will be able to steal some of the city's legendary wealth, and those who reach the humble plaza often turn violent. The city has been attacked three times by large bandit tribes set on stealing its fabled riches, and many Oaxacans died in these attacks. The city does not welcome visitors and treats all strangers with great mistrust and fear.

Oaxaca Mines

The Oaxaca mines riddle the caves near the city, turning them into a veritable honeycomb of labyrinthine passages in the search for gold and silver. Many of them are very valuable, turning out ores. Others are abandoned and in various stages of disrepair. Wise miners know what areas of the mountains to avoid and which caves are not safe. Yet still, the warriors of Oaxaca find all sorts of interesting enemies in these mines, and often gather to



destroy the creatures that move into the empty caves around the city.

The Cave of Legend

The Cave of Legend is one of the most important sites in Oaxaca, and, although all the city's residents know where it is located, few have ever been near it – and almost no one has ever ventured inside. The Cave of Legend isn't an actual cave opening, but is more of an open pit in the ground with no apparent bottom. It measures over 100 feet in diameter, and low stones ring the lip of the crater, placed there with elaborate sigils of protection and warning.

This is the cave where legend states that the moon goddess's body landed when she fell from the sky in the time of myth. Although no warrior has ever entered the deep cavern and returned, her body still remains at the bottom, its evil power drawing all manner of dangerous and evil beasts. At the opening of the cave, multiple stalagmites reach out of the crater like teeth from a gaping mouth. Native citizens of Oaxaca come to the crater to make sacrifices to the dead goddess and often leave strings of flowers, paper, or woven garments hanging on these stalagmites. The strange "decoration" of these rocks lasts for years, and occasionally more violent sacrifices are found among the stalagmites at the mouth of the cave (whether left by citizens of Oaxaca, or by the monsters in the wilderness who also revere Coyolxauhqui is not certain).

Mitla

Meaning "Place of the Dead," Mitla is a site just below Mount Alban, and is the primary worship center for the Oaxaca people. Its architecture is significantly different from that of most early Aztec worship sites; rather than being pyramid-shaped, it is a low-lying horizontal complex of plazas. Decorating the wall panels are intricate geometric stonework, stucco, and mosaic tiles. In its subterranean passages are highly detailed frescoes. Mitla is a testament to the sophisticated architectural techniques practiced by the Oaxacans. Only those raised in the city can navigate its extraordinary system of levels and tunnels, and it takes years to learn the complex mechanisms of switches, turning doors, secret passages, and other safeguards. Mitla was originally designed as a safe haven for the city when bandit tribes raided Oaxaca to plunder its mythical streets of gold. It has turned into a sacred location, where many festivals, burials, and other important ceremonies are held.

Monte Alban

Not far from Mitla is Monte Alban, great ancient city of the Oaxaca. Like Mitla, the structure of Monte Alban is a complex of wide, low-lying buildings with sunken courts and stairways. Monte Alban is not a ceremonial site, nor is it a stronghold. It was built for the primary purpose of keeping the great calendar of the Aztec nation. Monte Alban provides a permanent structure of stone that traces the movements of the heavens as the stars, sun, and moon move across the sky.

The main building was created with its main entrance facing northeast and is carved from stone in a very unusual shape. Five-sided, like a misshapen pentagon, the building does not have a symmetrical layout. It is not a pyramid, although it rises many feet from the mountain slope. It serves as an observatory for the primary purpose of watching and tracking the skies. No two walls or angles have the same



The Quetzal

Some of the primary exports of the city of Cholula are feathered headdresses, ritual robes, and other materials created from the magnificent plumage of the sacred quetzal bird. Such raiment is considered only suitable for the very wealthy or for chiefs and priests. The quetzal bird is sacred to Quetzalcoatl, and bears his name as a sign of loyalty to the god. Any layperson who kills a quetzal is sentenced to death.

The quetzal is the most beautiful bird in all the lands of the Aztec, outshining every other creature with its grace, striking coloration, and magnificent song. The iridescent color of its plumage appears green or blue, according to the changes of daytime light. Four long, glittering tail feathers stream behind the colorful male, and the female's plumage is only slightly less resplendent.

Once considered a plumed serpent for its unusual spiraling tail, the iridescent green bird is now a sacred animal. The priests of the Cholula temple keep an entire aviary of these birds, untouched by knives and sacred to their practices. Those headdresses and robes created from quetzal feathers must be taken from birds in the wild, for the ones within the temple are considered to be Quetzalcoatl's own children, left behind by the god to sing his praises in the Aztec lands.

Although Cholula is famous for its creations made of quetzal feathers, the bird is indigenous to most of the Aztec Empire. It lives in the mountainous, subtropical, and humid regions of Mexico, and can be found in many different locations.

and setting, marking it directly in the rear of the building where a massive stone points to the horizon. In addition, a sightline running perpendicular from the doorway atop the stairs marks the Pleiades and keeps the seasonal motion of the stars carefully charted. A less-used sighting stone marks the rising of the star Capella, an astrological phenomenon that occurs only once a year as the sun reaches its zenith above Monte Alban.

Cholula

Cholula is the famed Aztec city of religion, a place where the Gods are worshipped on a daily basis, and even the most common person is a fanatic for the will of the powers above. Nowhere else in the Aztec Empire, even in the famed capital of Tenochtitlan, are the sacrifices to the Gods as fervent or as plentiful. The ancient city of Cholula lies nearly 60 miles south of the northern border of the Aztec Empire and about 36 miles southeast of Tenochtitlan.

The name, "Cholula," means "water that spouts" or "a place to run" in the Nahuatl tongue. The name was given to the city due to the plentiful waterfalls that dot the area, providing a great amount of scenic beauty to the city. Some of these waterfalls are even incorporated into the architecture, and water drops from a tremendous height at the top of the grand palace and from the temples on the pyramid rises. Most inhabitants live in small stone houses carved out of the nearby mountains, or in collections of thatched huts that huddle in the shadows of the great pyramids. The city is a beautiful sight, with tiered pyramids silhouetted against the sky, backed by two huge, snow-capped peaks. The towering mountains of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl loom in the background like massive guardians, and rivers bisect the city, flowing down over the walls in huge waterfalls.

The largest pyramid in the Aztec lands is the *Teocali de Cholula*, a temple used to worship Quetzalcoatl. Within the pyramid's mass lie more than five miles of tunnels, a portion of which are protected by strong magic created and laid down by the priests of Quetzalcoatl. Shafts branch off in every direction. The top of the tunnel complex comes up at the summit of the pyramid in a massive, gold-painted arch that shines like the sun.

Cholula was the last city that Quetzalcoatl visited in his passage to the coast when he fled the deceptions and treachery of Tezcatlipoca. He left behind in Cholula all of his advancements and knowledge of civilization, architecture, writing and science, and the city of Cholula holds the vast repertoire of his knowledge. Their library, safely protected within the very heart of the *Teocali de Cholula*, contains knowledge beyond that which mortal minds can comprehend.

measurements, and along the back walls of the building is an array of stone plaques depicting different scenes and figures from Aztec myth and, more importantly, a long row of stone sighting blocks designed to frame star patterns at certain points of the year. With this, the Oaxacans can always tell the proper time to plant, harvest, or perform religious ceremonies.

The main hallway of the building is precisely oriented to line up with the polar star, keeping it firmly in sight no matter the time of year. Through the rest of the building, windows and star stones track the Southern Cross's rising

Quetzalcoatl taught the people of Cholula the best and most effective forms of government and fanned the flames of their fanaticism. Now, his temple reaps the reward of their eagerness, and Cholula is the most religious city in the Aztec Empire.

The city is the oldest continuously occupied on the continent, dating back to cultures that vastly precede the Aztec and Mayan peoples. It was the holy city of the Anahuac, a mysterious race that long ago abandoned their cities and left them wholly unoccupied. Some of the older buildings of Cholula date back to this ancient pre-history, concealing towers, chambers, and ruined crypts beneath their vaulted architecture.

There are more than 230 towers and 30 temples in the city of Cholula. Some of them are smaller shrines, but many of them are active temples to the Aztec gods. Every deity in the pantheon has at least one main place of worship, and some temples are dedicated to lesser spirits or simply used on high holidays. More than 20,000 houses line the tremendous exterior walls, and seven full villages of thatched huts lie outside the main city gate.

The city's shape is that of a tremendous truncated pyramid, its four sides facing the cardinal points and divided into the same number of terraces. Outside the primary city complex stand tremendous walls that protect Cholula from enemies. These fortifications feature cascading fountains that send water down into the river that flows along the edge of the city proper. The terraced steps of the internal pyramid house a great number of people and are themselves more than 20 yards wide. Canals flow along the inner plazas of Cholula, and bridges span the river where it leads into the heart of the city. All through the complex, standing like guardians over the city, are the famous temples of Cholula.

The largest of these, the *Teocali de Cholula*, is covered with vines and soft earth. The temple is round, evoking the god of wind, and the priests conduct daily sacrifice to the city's primary patron, the mighty Quetzalcoatl. Religious rites in Cholula are not performed, however, in the pure spirit originally prescribed by the peaceful Quetzalcoatl. His altars, as well as those of other Aztec gods, are continually stained with human blood. Six thousand victims are annually offered up at the Cholula sanguinary shrines, a number even greater than those sacrificed each year in the capital city of Tenochtitlan.

Cholula Baths

While most cities within the Empire offer public bathing facilities with cold-water baths, Cholula has special access to warmer, underground springs. Several buildings within the city are constructed around them, encasing them and

Stone Serpents

Size:	Large Construct
Hit Dice:	12d10 (66 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+6 (Dex)
Speed:	30 feet
AC:	27 (-1 Size, +6 Dex, +12 Natural)
Attacks:	Bite +13/+8 melee (2d4+6 and Infection)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 10 feet
Special Attacks:	Spell-storing
Special Qualities:	Constrict, Construct, Fast Healing 5, Find Master, Guard
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +8
Abilities:	Str 19, Dex 22, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Skills:	None.
Feats:	None.
Climate/Terrain:	Any Land
Organization:	Solitary or Temple brood (2-5)
Challenge Rating:	6
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always Neutral
Advancement:	13-24 HD (Large), 25-36 HD (Huge)

The stone serpents of Cholula are defenders of the temples of Quetzalcoatl. They were originally created at that site, but some few are recently being made at other temples or sites of worship dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. They are designed to be temple guardians and act as protectors of the priests within the pyramid.

Stone Serpents (cont.)

A stone serpent is a creature constructed entirely of shifting plates carved of stone, linked together into the form of a gigantic serpent. They are very stylized, with their features and painted scales resembling many other pieces of Aztec art. They are imposing sculptures of granite, obsidian, or other stone that, when fashioned, is keyed to a particular temple and an amulet within it. The amulet is worn by the High Priest (or a priest charged with the temple's defense) of Quetzalcoatl. The stone serpents will only rouse when he wills them or when the temple is under full attack by outside forces. The wearer of the amulet can command these serpents from any distance, although he must be a priest of Quetzalcoatl for the serpents to obey.

Combat

Stone serpents are straightforward in battle, using their great speed to corral opponents and attack them in groups. They are designed for defense, and are far more effective in that capacity than in any other.

Constrict (Ex): A stone serpent deals 2d6+4 points of damage with a successful Grapple check against Huge or smaller creatures. The stone serpent can still move freely while constricting one or more opponents, attacking up to five Small creatures, three Medium creatures, or one Large or Huge one in separate constriction attempts.

Guard (Ex): The stone serpent moves swiftly to defend the amulet-wearer or any other priests of Quetzalcoatl (in that order or precedence). It will block blows, disrupt foes, and offer limited cover to those who seek refuge behind its massive stone coils. All attacks against those defended by a stone serpent suffer a -2 Deflection Penalty.

Find Master (Su): No matter the distance, the stone serpent is aware of the location and health of the priest of Quetzalcoatl who wears the temple's amulet. If commanded to seek him out by the owner of the amulet, the stone serpent can find the amulet-wearer no matter where he is hidden (or at least, they can find the amulet, if the item has been removed). The stone serpents are also immediately aware if the amulet-priest is deceased, even if he did not have the amulet with him at the time of his death. When the amulet-wearer dies, the stone serpents will emit a singular cry of distress and sorrow, a chilling keen that notifies anyone within hearing of their current location.

Stone Serpents (cont.)

Spell Storing (Sp): The stone serpent can indefinitely store one Divine Spell of 5th Level or lower that is cast into it by a priest of Quetzalcoatl. It casts this spell when commanded or when a predetermined situation arises. Once the stored spell is used, the stone serpent is "empty" and can store another spell or the same spell once more.

Construction

Stone serpents are created by a lengthy process of clerical magic that is only known to the priests of Quetzalcoatl. They cost 100,000 gold (or the equivalent) to create. This price includes the serpent's physical body, the creation and enchanting of the central amulet of the temple, and all materials and spell components (which are consumed when the serpent is created).

The first task is to physically create the serpent's material form. It may be created from granite, obsidian, or any other hard stone, requiring a successful Profession: Engineering or Craft: Sculpted Figures check at a DC of 18. The second step is to create the temple's amulet, requiring a successful Metalworking check (DC 14). After both are fashioned, the entire temple must perform an exhausting, week-long ritual to Quetzalcoatl. The priest leading the ritual must be of 12th or higher level, and possess the Craft Wondrous Item Feat. This ritual requires at least eight hours a day of constant prayer and sacrifice from at least 10 priests of Quetzalcoatl's faith. When not working on the ritual, these priests can take no actions other than eating, sleeping, and talking. If the primary priest misses a single day of this ritual or does not participate for eight hours every day, the entire process is a failure and must begin once more, with all materials lost.

Completing the ritual drains 2500 Experience from the creator. If the keyed amulet is destroyed, all stone serpents attached to it are also rendered inert and useless.

opening them to the wealthier citizens of the city. These natural saunas, steam baths, and warm springs are a rare commodity and much lauded within the Aztec lands as one of Cholula's numerous blessings.

Although only a few of these natural warm springs exist, almost every wealthy dwelling has access to a small bathhouse created by the ingenuity of their architects. These personal steam-chambers are small hemispherical buildings shaped rather like a dome with a low doorway. Inside these buildings are low fireplaces, and the blaze warms the adjacent wall of the bathhouse until it glows red hot. At this stage, a bather rests on a bench within the low house and a servant throws water onto the hot wall until the interior of the bathhouse is filled with steam.

To increase the flow of perspiration and to gain full benefit from the treatment, the bather switches himself or herself with twigs or bundles of grass. A type of soap created only in Cholula is used for washing, but such soap is very expensive and few have access to it in any quantity.

The bathing process might be followed by a massage or by a long period of formal meditation and relaxation while lying stretched out on a woven mat. Both men and women use these steam baths (though not together), and there are a few public steam baths located in the poorer sections of Cholula. These bathing houses are used by the common people for ritual purifications, religious meditation, and the treatment of certain diseases more often than as a normal part of everyday hygiene.

Tenayuca Pyramid

The largest pyramid in Aztec lands is located within the religious city of Cholula. This colossal structure is more than twice the size of the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan, and built to exacting standards. It took more than 700 slaves over ten years to build it, and the measurements were so precise that, three times during its construction, parts of the pyramid were built, torn down, and replaced within the exacting specifications. Any deviation was an insult to the god, and was rectified not just by correction but also by soothing him with sacrifices.

On the summit of a high slope within the city stands this perfect, sumptuous temple to Quetzalcoatl. The image of

the deity is carved and tiled into the mosaic of the pyramid with jeweled and elaborate handicraft, depicting him with ebon features (unlike the fair complexion which he bore during his time on Earth). Quetzalcoatl is depicted wearing a tall, feathered headdress waving with plumes of fire. He bears a resplendent collar of gold round his neck, pendants of mosaic turquoise in his ears, and a jeweled scepter in one hand. Instead of a weapon in his other hand, he has a tremendous shield. This differentiates him from

such Gods as Tezacatlipoca, Mictlancihuatl or

Huitzilopochtli. Quetzalcoatl's shield is the emblem

of his rule over the winds, rather than as a sign of his domination. The images are easily 20 feet high, depicting Quetzalcoatl as the primary deity of the heavens and the most powerful god in the pantheon. These frescoes and mosaics are considered blasphemous by priests of other Aztec deities, but the power of the Quetzalcoatl temple and the fanaticism of the Cholula followers keep such talk to a minimum. The sanctity of the place and the magnificence of the temple and its services make the Tenayuca Pyramid an object of veneration throughout the Aztec lands. Pilgrims from the furthest corners of Aztec society travel to Cholula come to offer up their devotions at the shrine of Quetzalcoatl.

The Grand Pyramid of Tenayuca is built to rise above every other building within the city of Cholula. It stands on escalated foundations formed by four rows of vertical walls each more than 10 feet tall. Ninety-five serpents hewn of stone are placed like guardian soldiers around the pyramid walls, eternally watching the sacred edifice. Within the heart of each of these stone serpents is the skull of a loyal warrior of Quetzalcoatl. If the temple is ever attacked or defaced, they will come alive to defend the structure and

the priests within. The immense stone stairs are decorated with reliefs depicting the most famous legends of Quetzalcoatl's life and with glorified depictions of the god and his radiance. The staircase that leads up to the main temple-building atop the gigantic substructure is divided into two separate, parallel staircases. At the top of the structure is a huge stone chamber designed for the priests to worship Quetzalcoatl at the high holidays. This chamber is now used for sacrifices bloodier than any ever performed before in this



Malinalxochitl's Tears

The poison drawn from the well in Malinalco is extremely potent and is only gathered during times of the greatest need. Even the fearsome Jaguar Knights loathe having to collect it, for it is exceptionally dangerous to do so.

Approaching within 10 feet of the pool requires a Fortitude Feat at DC 15. Failure causes the affected character to lose consciousness from the fumes that emanate from the dark waters. Such characters take 1 point of Constitution Damage per hour. They must be pulled outside the range of the pool's fumes, after which they regain consciousness 1d6 hours later. The Constitution Damage is healed normally once the character is pulled free.

The poison itself is a contact one, and so great care must be taken not come in contact with the water while filling one's receptacles. A Reflex Save at DC 10 is required to avoid accidental contact with the water for any character with no experience harvesting the poison. Contact with the venom forces the victim to make a Fortitude Save at DC 20. Failure inflicts 1d12 points of Constitution Damage. The Secondary Damage is also 1d12.

Popocatepetl

Some miles southeast of Cholula, visible both from the city's walls and from the distant city of Tenochtitlan, stand the two great sacred mountains of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. Popocatepetl is an active volcano, hurling puffs of black smoke into the air in a fairly constant, predictable pattern. The mountain Popocatepetl rises more than 17,800 feet into the air and has a steep crater at the summit that leads down into darkness, heat, and death. None who venture into Popocatepetl's mouth ever return to tell the tale.

In Nahuatl, Popocatepetl means "smoking mountain." The volcano, while currently dormant, does frequently emit large clouds of smoke. The secondary mountain to its side is known as Ixtaccihuatl, meaning "sleeping lady" or "white lady." While Popocatepetl is an active volcano with a known lava pool inside its central chambers, Ixtaccihuatl is extinct, and does not smoke nor shudder with activity of any kind.

A romantic Aztec legend claims that Popocatepetl was once the name of a great and powerful warrior who was in love with the fair maiden Ixtaccihuatl, daughter of a tribal king. The lovers planned to marry, but they were thwarted by the evil trickery of the god, Tezcatlipoca. They went to Ixtaccihuatl's father to ask for his permission, but the king's mind had been poisoned with Tezcatlipoca's evil words against Popocatepetl. The king did not think that Popocatepetl was a worthy suitor for his daughter, and so he set a task for the warrior to achieve that would certainly be beyond mortal potential. The king told the lovers that he would allow the marriage only if Popocatepetl, fighting alone and without assistance, was victorious in battle against the entire might of a rival tribe. Popocatepetl went off to battle, and despite all odds, he was indeed victorious. Yet tales of his death were carried back to Ixtaccihuatl and her people by the servants of Tezcatlipoca, and Popocatepetl was mourned as one lost. Sorrowful beyond all purpose, the young princess refused all succor and soon died of grief that her beloved was lost. When Popocatepetl returned, victorious, he laid her body atop a mountain range and prayed to the gods not to separate them. They heard his prayer, and the body of the maiden assumed the shape of a sleeping lady – a form that is clearly evident in the western view of the Ixtaccihuatl Mountain today. Overcome with sadness, Popocatepetl climbed the adjacent peak where, standing sentinel with a smoking torch, he eternally watches over his lost lover.

There are numerous shrines, found as high as 12,000

temple. More than a hundred warriors are killed in this chamber each day, and the thick altar is permanently stained with blood.

Outside the main structure of the pyramid, a round wall built and tiled to resemble a feathered rattlesnake surrounds the building on all sides. The stones are carved delicately, and the serpent's mouth is open, revealing a passage within. However, only the priests are allowed to take this passage, and none outside their august body know where the snake's chamber leads. The passage heads into the huge pyramid, bisecting numerous tunnels that are built in its interior. There are many living guardians on these lower levels, protecting the pyramid from attack, including giant, venomous serpents, enchanted creatures, and physical traps and dangers.

feet on both peaks, where Aztecs journey to ask Popocatepetl to hear their prayers of loss or hopeless love. The two romantic figures are awarded a sort of demigod status and are often asked to intervene on behalf of the pilgrims and petitioners. It is also considered good luck for a bride and groom-to-be to travel to Popocatepetl and gather some of the dirt of the mountain to sprinkle over themselves on their wedding day.

Malinalco Cave

The cave of Malinalco is a fearsome site in the valley near the city of Cholula, and few dare to visit there. Those who speak the name immediately offer prayers to Quetzalcoatl or another such god, hoping that their transgression will not be noticed by the demons that live in the dark forest dell. It is a site of terror, where innocents are dragged screaming to their deaths, and it is a place of dark prophecy and darker magic.

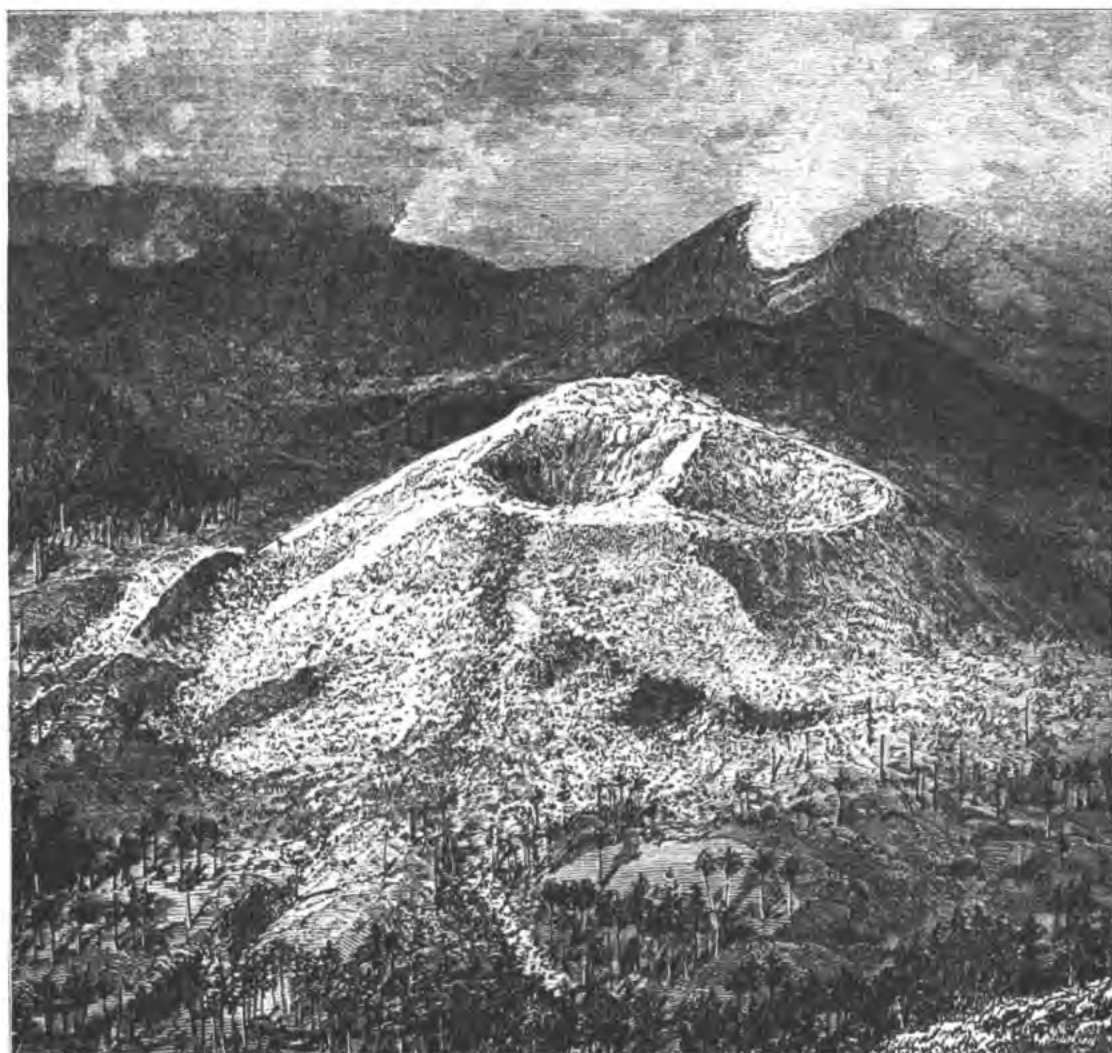
Malinalco is a place of legend and myth. The supreme god, Huitzilopochtli, sprang from his mother full-formed, murdering his moon-sister within moments of his own birth. Once he had defeated her, he turned to the stars and

demanded their loyalty. One of them, a sister named Malinalxochitl, refused. Before he could destroy her as well, she leapt from the heavens and sank into the Earth, evading his blade. She still lives here in the depths, camped with demons and black sorcery, planning for the day when the sun will be put out of the sky.

Only the Jaguar Knights of Tezcatlipoca can cross the threshold of Malinalco without being struck down by the servants of the Insane One. They walk in the dark shadow of their god, and she cannot see them. But even those dark warriors do not visit Malinalco lightly. Deep in its depths is a black pool, created by the goddess's mad tears, and the water from that spring is a powerful poison. Often used in ritual activities for the Jaguar orders, and an extremely painful way to die, this poison is harvested only in times of great need, when the enemy cannot otherwise be defeated.

Thirteen steps, flanked by jaguar statues, lead to the entrance of the cavern. The maw of the cave itself is carved to resemble a mask of a serpent whose forked tongue lies on the mossy ground before the cave

entrance. Inside the cave-like inner temple is a low, semi-circular bench with skulls of those recently killed lain out to dry. Behind a carved eagle in the centre of the floor is a deep hole, and down within it lies the chamber of black water, and more tunnels that lead deep into the earth. The region is dotted with caves and tunnels the lead into darkness and nothingness. Down in the depths, demon creatures live and breed, marauding out into the lands of the Aztecs and spreading Malinalxochitl's insanity.



Tlatchtli

The Aztecs are not a people without amusement, and one of their favorite pastimes is to play competitive, physically active games. These games are designed to inspire them to skills of great bravery and physical prowess and often are played by warriors in training for a great battle. The most popular of these games is known as *tlatchtli*. It is a very physically demanding game that requires great skill and strength. Only the noble class is allowed to take part in public contests that are held at ceremonial events, but all Aztecs are familiar with the rules, and there are many courts throughout every city in the nation. Public games are very popular, and anyone of any social class can watch and bet on the matches, and betting is almost as much a sport as *tlatchtli* itself. Many men win and lose their entire fortunes on a single game, betting gold, slaves, fine clothing, even their own freedom and that of their families. It is an honorable pastime and one with high risks for both audience and participant.

Tlatchtli is a game played with a solid rubber ball about as large as a person's head. It is played on a sunken court shaped like a capital letter "I," which is surrounded by rows of stone benches placed one above the other on slopes looking down on the court. The court and a platform above, to seat the highest-ranking nobles, are ornamented with the skulls of past players and of other sacrificial victims in the hopes that the gods will look favorably upon the brave actions that take place in the arena. Two stone rings hang down from the walls at either end of the team's zone (at the top and bottom crossbars of the "I"). The rings are eight feet to 10 feet off the ground, and the hole is less than a foot wide.

Aztlán

The earliest legends told by the Aztec people speak of an island far to the north, where their people originated. This island is *Aztlán*, Isle of the Herons, and it is a place of great myth and mystic power. Some heroes of the Aztec lands sought out the island in the past to speak with the gods themselves or to retrieve some mystic artifact hidden in the mists of the magical isle, but few dare to walk upon the

Tlatchtli (cont.)

The object of the game is to drive the ball over the centerline of the court and into the other side, hurling it through the other team's rings. One of the rules is that the ball must be kept in the air at all times; although it can be bounced off the walls, opponents, and teammates. It is legal to hit people with the ball, but it is not legal to carry it in any manner or to touch it with your hands. To score a point, the player must send the ball into the opposing team's court-area using his knees, feet, or hips. Each time the ball enters the "I" cross bar, the opposing team gets a point. The ball may not be kicked or thrown. If it is moved incorrectly, a penalty is called against the opposing team, which loses points or forfeits them to the other side. In the end, it does not truly matter how many points a team earns. The final goal of the game is to pass the ball through one of the stone rings on either end of the court. Once that happens, the game is over. The points are usually for betting purposes, rather than to actually determine the victor of the game. The team to pass the ball through the ring automatically wins.

Although the game is exceptionally difficult, it is also highly rewarding: it conveys reputation and respect for the players and offers gold and wealth for those who bet wisely. Skilled players are regarded as heroes and given special honors and commendations for their bravery and their prowess. The commoner all but worships him, and he is given many tithes from those who win on his games. A very valuable player is occasionally allowed to wear the rare quetzal feathers — something usually reserved for priests and high nobles or officials. Such a player gains considerable wealth and prestige both in his own cities and throughout the Aztec lands.

Not only is the game of *tlatchtli* difficult, it is extremely dangerous. The ball is made of thick, solid rubber and weighs more than five pounds. There are many injuries, and a player can be seriously hurt by even a light hit. Death is not unknown, and the priests routinely give heroes' funerals to those players unfortunate enough to have their skulls crushed by a *tlatchtli* ball. To protect themselves, participants wear thick leather belts and collars that cover their upper bodies as well as kneepads, elbow pads, and gloves.

lands claimed by the most ancient beings. The gods of the Aztecs are not forgiving of trespassers, and Aztlan is their singular haven upon the physical world.

Aztlan is the mythical place of origin of the Aztec peoples. The name, in Nahuatl, can be broken down into the two words, "aztatl" and "tlan," meaning "heron" and "place of," respectively. Aztlan is described as a white island in the center of a great, warm bay. Above its white sand shores, tremendous herons fly, bringing news of all the world to the gods who walk upon Aztlan's inner refuges. The Gods of the thirteen heavens visit Aztlan to keep themselves knowledgeable of all that occurs in the physical world and also to speak with one another on neutral ground. Aztlan is a place of peace, and none are allowed to make war or commit atrocity upon that island—not even the Gods.

The isle of Aztlan has only seven buildings, and each one is a magnificent temple to the gods. Before the stairs of each, the white herons pluck out their breast feathers in tribute, leaving a fine white covering over the ground of the island.

Deep beneath the seven temples of the isle are the deep caves of the Earth, the lands of bone and darkness from which the Gods plucked humanity. Chicomostoc, the seven caves of life, are the origins of the Aztec people and one of their most sacred sites. The stones of Chicomostoc are carved of flesh and bone, and there is a great muttering whisper that echoes through the bowels of the earth itself. This is the place where the gods pulled the first Aztecs from the ground, shaped their bodies, and breathed life into their mouths.

The Migration Scrolls

The early Aztecs kept very few written records of the Isle of Aztlan or their journey from the land of the Gods, but their tales are retold throughout the land. Some priests, notably those of Quetzalcoatl, wrote down many of these stories in a great codex known as the Migration Scrolls. These texts contain the only solid information about Aztlan's true whereabouts, or the roads that will lead heroes to the Island of the Gods. These scrolls are highly protected and are quite difficult to procure given the extreme precautions and protections of the Aztec temple guardians. In order to read the migration scrolls, one must prove himself to the highest of Aztec priests, or there must be a serious emergency affecting the entire nation. Journeying to the Isle of Aztlan is not something that should be undertaken lightly; angering the gods results in terrible punishments for all mortals, and only blood can appease them once they are disturbed.

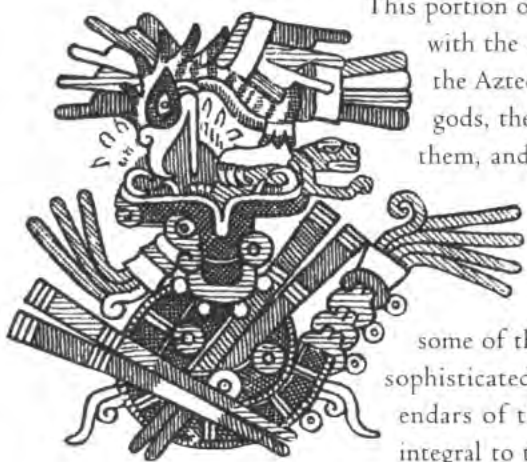
Legend of Kokopelli

Kokopelli was a proud Aztec who came to Aztlan from deep in the lands of the Toltec. His background is shrouded in mystery, but there are those who say he was the son of Quetzalcoatl, born of that god's time upon the mortal realm. He traveled, alone, to the Isle of Aztlan in order to discover the truth of his heritage. He is the only hero known to ever return from that place.

The name of Kokopelli carries with it many myths and legends. All stories agree on one thing: he played the Indian Flute. He is a traveler, born of a divine lineage and serving as the voice of the gods among the common people of the Aztec nation. His music brings fertility to the land and to the Aztec people. Trade routes from the most southern Aztec cities to their northernmost borders are marked with petroglyphs of the famous humped-back flute player. Stories about his life are colorfully told around many a council fire, and his praises are sung in many village gatherings. His seed is sacred and the children born of him are blessed with special talents. Any woman chosen by Kokopelli as his mate for the evening is honored among her people, and she will certainly bear a child descended from the race of gods.

Kokopelli, the flute player, is an Aztec symbol of happiness and joy, but he is also a real being. He talks to the wind and the sky, and travels quietly through the Aztec lands to trade and to spread the bounty of his presence. His flute is often heard in the spring breeze, bringing warmth after the winter cold. Kokopelli embodies everything pure and spiritual about music. He is a fertility figure, a hero, a trader, and traveling prankster. He visits villages under many different guises, always playing his flute and carrying goods for trade upon his back. If the village trades well and fairly with him, he will stay the night, playing his flute for the villagers and bringing happiness and revelry. In the morning, when he leaves, the crops are even more plentiful and the land is rich and fertile. The village, blessed for their honor and the hospitality that they showed to him, will have a plentiful year.

Part 3: Magic, Religion, and Faith



This portion of the book deals with the spiritual nature of the Aztecs, covering their gods, their worship of them, and their belief in magic.

Calendars

The Aztecs have some of the most sophisticated and accurate calendars of the time. Each is integral to their understanding of the universe and their religious ceremony.

Myths and Creation

On the top of Huixachtatl, the Hill of Stars, stands a 12-foot, 20-calendar stone. An exact duplicate of it occupies the altar of the Pyramid of the Sun outside the capital city of Tenochtitlan. These two stones form the heart of the Aztec calendar, a constant revolution of the sun in the heavens, counted dutifully by those priests of the people whose task it is to keep up with the movement of the heavens. Natural phenomena in the Mexico Valley and elsewhere are seen as the movements of the gods and the reflection of the heavenly world upon the physical territories of humanity. These movements, seasons, storms, and natural disasters, are all related to the temperament of the gods. Early Aztecs attempted to placate them, but more modern Priests understand that the gods cannot be altered; they are immutable and can only be begged for mercy, not bargained with or bought.

The Aztecs understand the movement of celestial phenomena, and they see the power of their gods with the rising of each morning's sun. The gods may be merciless, but they follow laws and boundaries set upon them by Coatlique, the creator of the universe. Exact observations of these celestial bodies can be recorded and

predicted with astounding accuracy. So, the Aztecs began the formation of their calendar and set upon a path which established and became a foundation of their society. They recorded the movements of these heavenly bodies on their monuments and in their codices, and are capable of exceptionally advanced science, mathematics, and astronomy.

The Aztec Calendar Stone tracks the sun's movements across the sky. Each morning, the priests of the Temple of the Sun make precise measurements of the sun's rising point against the stone's broad features, and from this they can determine the Earth's place within the calendar year. The stone, a solid and well-respected item, is a significant holy symbol to the priests of all Aztec religions. It signifies their concept of the universe as a solid foundation upon which all life is based – a patterned system, filled with order and predictability. This gives the people a sense of continuity, a solid basis for their lives.

On its most basic level, this stone (and its identical twin on the Hill of Stars) serves as an agricultural map. The priests who read its markings understand that it indicates the proper season to plant and reap crops and when to hold festivals for the gods who regulate the elements. On a deeper level, this agricultural worship, imbedded in the symbols of the Aztec calendar, belies concerns and beliefs about the natural world in which they live. The gods control the world and all of its movements and make their presence and wishes known through the even continuity of the world and the progression of its heavenly bodies.

The astrological calendar is based on the cycles of the planet, Venus, also known as the "Morning Star." The brightest light in the heavens transforms from morning star to evening star in a solid, predictable cycle which takes approximately 584 days.

Five complete cycles can be solidly counted as eight sun years.

Every 2,920 days, the Aztec calendar returns to the beginning, and the sun is reset within the heavens.

Therefore, the solar calendar consists of 18 months of 20 days apiece. In addition to this, there is a singular festival known as



the *nemontemi*, which consists of five additional days at the end of the year. This festival is a time of mourning, hiding from the wrath of the gods, and of prayers for the next year to continue – a choice which the gods make each time a *nemontemi* is reached. If the Gods are pleased with the progression of the world, they will allow it to continue. If they are not, it will end, and all life will cease – devoured and destroyed by Coatlique.

Function

The Aztec calendar is circular, based on a seasonal wheel with 52 squares, or years, upon each side. A full revolution of the calendar is the equivalent of one cycle. The Aztec year is broken into a 260-day cycle called a *tzolkin*. It consists of two stone wheels arranged against each other: a larger one, comprised of a monthly cycle of 20 days, and a smaller one with the numbers one through 13. The number of days in a month represents the digits of a warrior – a “whole and healthy man.” The thirteen numbers, counting each week as it passed through the cycle, represents the Aztec philosophy of 13 directions and 13 elements.

Although their system of months and days is somewhat faulty, and the year turns through their calendar at a slightly irregular rate, the Aztecs make no calendar adjustment until the close of the 52-year cycle. At that point, 13 days are added to the final year – the festival of Nexiuhpiliztli. A solemn feast punctuated by celebration and sacrifice, the Nexiuhpiliztli is held to celebrate the completion or binding of a perfect circle of years. This feast is an elaborate production, with parades, significant sacrifices, and celebrations throughout the Toltec lands. At the end of the 52 year period, the astrological and solar calendars will once again coincide.

Each rotation through the 13 numbers represents one “week” in the Aztec system. The first, sixth, 11th, and 16th weeks are of particular importance: they create the four divisions of their year. These are considered seasonal weeks, and each one is celebrated with a holiday appropriate to the season.

The circle is divided into four equal parts, each containing 13 years. The first part belongs to the East, whose years are called “Reeds.” These years are considered good and fertile. Good fortune walks the land during this time, and the crops are healthy and abundant. The second division of years belongs to the West, whose time is called “Houses.” Unhappy events occurred during these years, and many priests believe that the years of the Western Wind are plagued with evil and misfortune. The house is used to indicate that during these years the sun will hide and crops are poor and infertile.

The third section of years within the Aztec calendar belongs to the North and is symbolized by a Flint Knife. The Aztecs fear this cycle and believe that it heralds war and misfortune.

The 20 Days of the Aztec Month

The 20 days of the month in both English and Nahuatl are listed below:

Snake	—	Coatl
Lizard	—	Cuetzpallin
House	—	Calli
Wind	—	Ehecatl
Crocodile	—	Cipactli
Flower	—	Xochitl
Rain	—	Quiahuitl
Flint	—	Tecpatl
Movement	—	Ollin
Vulture	—	Cozcacuauhtli
Eagle	—	Cuauhtle
Jaguar	—	Ocelotl
Cane	—	Acatl
Herb	—	Malinalli
Monkey	—	Ozomatli
Hairless Do	—	Itzquintli
Water	—	Atl
Rabbit	—	Tochtli
Deer	—	Mazatl
Skull	—	Miquiztli

Where the years of the West are unfortunate, those of the North are hard and violent, stealing lives and showing no remorse for the difficulties they present. In the underworld, Mictlampa (the Infernal Region), is located to the North, and all ill fortune comes from that land. These years are equally troubled and cold. These are barren and fruitless years, where little rain falls, and people go hungry or die in battle.

Lastly, the fourth part of the calendar belongs to the South, and these are known as the “Rabbit” years. This time is mildly favorable, with few ill tidings, but no good fortune. They are resting years, in which the dead are buried and the cycle of life continues. Luck is an uncertain principal in the Rabbit Years, leaping back and forth and refusing to stay in one place.

Duties of the Tonalpouque

Priests who interpret signs and events from the Aztec calendar are given special titles and respect. They are called *tonalpouque*, and they are the only ones allowed to formally state that a season, year, festival, or cycle has officially begun. The *tonalpouque* record the predictions and events in sacred books called *tonalamatl* (paper or book of the days).

When a child is born, he or she is given the name of the current day to bear as his or her own until reaching adulthood. It only changes after proving one's self in the games, through marriage, or by other means. The *tonalamatl* priests visit the baby within its first three days, using astrology and calendar science to predict whether or not the child will grow up to be rich or lucky in life. These predictions also tell if he or she will lead a blessed life or an unfortunate one, whether the child will be sacrificed or made a prisoner of war, whether he or she will be honest or loving or kind or gentle or a criminal, and any number of other aspects of the child's life-to-be. For this service, the *tonalamatl* priests are paid well in grain and cacao beans and are revered and respected in all corners of the Aztec Empire.

Thirteen Heavens and Nine Hells

Above and below the world there are 13 heavens and nine hells. The underworlds, each deeper and more horrible than the last, contain torments and trials for the fleshless – the dead souls of the Aztecs – to suffer for four years before rest is attained. This world,

Cem-a-nahuac, contains only fleshly pleasures; fallen respites from the paradises above. The 13 heavens join the waters that completely surround the world, and each one rises closer to Huitzilopochtli, the Sun.

Within the heavens, connected by a series of bright passages, are the corridors through

which the stars run. On the first five levels are the paths of the stars, the moon, the sun, Venus, and the comets. Beyond those are the heavens of color, the region of the gods, and above all things is the supreme heaven, Omeyocan, the dwelling place of the supreme gods.

Human and animal sacrifices are a large part of Aztec religion, a means by which the people of Cem-a-nahuac can pay tribute to and communicate with the gods, despite the great distance between Cem-a-nahuac and Omeyocan. Aztec warriors do not fear death; it is a natural part of the cycle and holds no shame or dishonor. Pain is transient, and the heavens so outweigh this world that any sensible person would wish to go there as soon as possible with great honor so that the gods will open the gates of the 13 Heavens to them rather than casting them down into the Nine Hells.

Prisoners, brought to the Pyramid of the Sun in order to be sacrificed to Huitzilopochtli, are also used in less important ceremonies. The Aztecs please their gods through offerings of blood spilled by sacrifice. Bad fortune, droughts, eclipses, or other supernatural occurrences, are met with heavier sacrifices until the gods are once more pleased with their people. Human sacrifice is performed for eminently logical reasons: to guarantee the continuing nature of human existence, to make sure the sun, stars, and the moon will rise and to appease the gods such that drought, famine, earthquakes, and insect blights will not occur in the immediate future.

Each year, thousands of victims of sacrifice – both willing and captive prisoners of war – climb the steps of the Pyramid of the Sun and other temples in the Empire. There, priests stretch them across an outwardly curved stone and rip their hearts out with a sharp knife. The blood is caught in basins which are offered to the Gods through fire and the cleansing properties of earth. And yet, side by side with their barbarity, the Aztec priests are scholars and scientists, and focus much of their theology on the principal of intellectual life since the mind enables the human ability to rise above the level of animals and become like gods.

The Gods

There are numerous major deities and hundreds of minor ones. The most powerful gods have temples in the major cities of the Empire, and many of these are tremendous pyramids that raise their temples into the sky. Below are the most important, and popular, Aztec gods.

Coatlque

Coatlque, also known as “she of the Serpent Skirt,” is one of the most important deities in the Aztec pantheon. She is the creator of the universe, and, through her, all other gods





were born. Her son Huitzilopochtli is the sun in heaven, and her daughter was the Moon. All the stars are her children, as are all living things on the world. Her image is that of a ferocious warrior — a tall woman with weapons in her hands and an intimidating demeanor. Yet, despite her ferocity, she is an Earth

Mother whose shrine stands on

ancient ground. Within the caves of Coatlicue, a petitioner may come and hear of his or her future, but those who do so should be warned that such knowledge is addictive, and anyone who learns too much is certain to go mad. *Her Domains are Earth, Divination, and Law. Her favored weapon is the bloodied knife, and she is Lawful Neutral in Alignment.*

Huehueoteotl

Huehueoteotl is the old man of the Aztec pantheon, an ancient deity renowned for his wisdom as well as his temper. He is the god of fire, and he is worshipped not only in Aztec lands but also among the Mayans. His priests are welcome in all corners of Mesoamerica, no matter what their cultural background, since they are needed at the Temples of Fire. The maintenance of fires in the temples is one of the principal duties of these priests. Fires within the Pyramids and other religious sites are only lit once every year; their flames must last the entire cycle of the calendar and may only be relit during the days of *nemontemi*. The renewal of fire is identified with the renewal of time itself, and only the priests of Huehueoteotl may re-light the sacred flames outside of the five days of *nemontemi*. *Priests of Huehueoteotl may choose their Domains from the realms of Fire, Good, and Travel.* His favored weapon is a walking staff, seared black from the heat of a kiln. *His Alignment is Neutral Good.*

Huitzilopochtli

Huitzilopochtli's name translates as "Warrior of the South brought back from the dead," and he is the most powerful god in the Aztec pantheon. Strong enough to disobey his mother's desires, Huitzilopochtli is the last of the sun gods, and the only warrior left standing between Cem-a-nahuac and eternal darkness. His temple at the Pyramid of the Sun is the focus of fearsome sacrifices of prisoners captured by Aztec warriors. Victims' heads were strung as trophies on a great rack erected in the plazas below. Because he is identified with the sun, Huitzilopochtli is the primary

Aztec Priests

Aztec priests are known as *chachalmeca*, and they are extremely high-ranking members of society. Very few women are priests, and those that are serve only female deities. To become a priest, a person must first be a *pilli* — a noble within Aztec society. The gods will accept no lesser petitioners to serve their favor. In many cases, priestly positions are passed down from father to son.

The most famous priest in Aztec history is Topiltzin, priest of the god Quetzalcoatl. There are many stories about his life and death and as many legends as there are facts about his existence. One legend states that he was a man of strangely white skin, while another recounts that he was the son of Coatlicue and a mortal man. He is known as both an Emperor and as the High Priest of Tenochtitlan. He was not a popular ruler, and, in fact, more than one Aztec faction tried to have him removed from the throne by political means or through assassination. The faction that opposed Topiltzin the most sent sorcerers to get him drunk and arranged his unknowing incest with his sister. Due to this great embarrassment, Topiltzin left the lands of Mexico in order to repent his deeds. He promised to return one day with an army and wipe out all those who opposed his reclamation of the Throne of the Sun.

source of life and of death, and his special devotees are the warriors. Warriors among the Aztecs are charged to provide the sun with sacrificial victims so that Huitzilopochtli might remain strong enough to stay in the sky. Those who are favored by him will return to Earth as hummingbirds after their deaths, so that they may see their families prosper in their absence.

Huitzilopochtli's favored animal disguise and patron creature is the eagle. According to his command, Tenochtitlan was founded where an eagle was seen defeating a serpent. Pictures of Huitzilopochtli usually show him as an eagle or a warrior with armor and helmet made of feathers. His legs, arms and the lower part of his face are painted blue; the upper half of his face is black. He wears an

The Creation of Human Beings

After the sky and earth were seeded with beasts of all kinds, Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl decided to create people to inhabit the new world. In order to do this, Quetzalcoatl traveled to the underworld to retrieve a bone taken from the Earth's own body. Mictlantecuhli agreed to give up the bones if Quetzalcoatl completed a task. The quest required Quetzalcoatl to walk the entire length of the underworld four times while sounding a trumpet made out of a conch shell. Mictlantecuhli, however, did not want to give up the bones so easily. So he made the simple task more challenging by not drilling holes in the conch shell, preventing the trumpet from sounding. Quetzalcoatl completed the task by calling upon worms to drill holes in the shell and by having bees enter the trumpet.

elaborate feathered headdress and carries a round shield and a turquoise snake. The sacrificial hearts were offered and burned in the *quauhxicalli* ("the eagle's bowl"). Warriors who died in battle or on the sacrificial stone were called *quauhteca* ("the eagle's people"). *Huitzilopochtli's favored Domains are War, Sun and Law, and his chosen weapon is the long spear. His alignment is Lawful Neutral.*

Mictlantecuhli and Mictlancihuatl

Mictlantecuhli, god of the dead, is one of the most fearsome figures in the Aztec pantheon. Despite the fact that Aztec warriors rarely fear the act of dying, the Nine Hells of their afterlife – province of Mictlantecuhli – are places to be deeply feared. Mictlantecuhli's realm is the underworld of Mictlampa (the Infernal Region), and all ill fortune comes from that land. In depictions across the Empire, Mictlantecuhli is shown as a semi-fleshless skeleton standing with hands in the air. Dressed in a skirt-like garment and loincloth and adorned with ear ornaments and necklace, he wears a half rosette on his forehead, which originally was made of folded paper and was characteristic of gods of death. His wife is Mictlancihuatl, the grieving goddess of the dead who collects lost souls and brings them

to her husband. *Both grant access to the Death, War, and Healing Domains and are Neutral Evil.* Mictlantecuhli's favored weapon is the spiked club.

Quetzalcoatl

Quetzalcoatl is the god of civilization, learning, and the wind. Quetzalcoatl is the name of a deity, a royal title, the name of a legendary priest-ruler, and the title of high priestly office. But his most fundamental significance as a natural force is symbolized by the sculpture of a coiled, plumed serpent rising into the wind. The image of the serpent rising from the Earth and bearing water on its tail is a description of Quetzalcoatl as a powerful thunderstorm, with wind raising dust before the rain. He is also the inventor of writing and the calendar.

In the timeless landscape of Xochicalco, the Plumed Serpent, this gentle god of learning and peace has the most sacred of his shrines. The glory of Quetzalcoatl provoked the envy of other gods. One, Tezcatlipoca, offered Quetzalcoatl a gift. So they went to the palace and Tezcatlipoca gave him the gift wrapped in cotton. Quetzalcoatl unwrapped it and discovered a mirror. The god saw his reflection for the first time. He realized that, unlike other Aztec gods, he had a human face and therefore also a human destiny. The next day he fled to the East on a raft of serpents, promising to return one day. *Quetzalcoatl's Domains of choice are Travel, Air, and Knowledge. His Alignment is Lawful Good, and he has no preferred weapon.*

Tezcatlipoca

Tezcatlipoca is the Aztec god of night and sorcery. He is also known as the god of the smoking mirror for the evil trick he played on Quetzalcoatl (see above). His symbol is an obsidian disk, and he is characterized as the most powerful of evil deities. He is associated with the notion of destiny and is further identified with royalty because Tezcatlipoca was the final arbiter of a king's actions when the latter passed into the underworld. Tezcatlipoca's chosen animal is the jaguar, the spotted skin of which was compared to the starry sky.

Tezcatlipoca is depicted with a stripe of black paint across his face and an obsidian mirror at his feet. In his mirror,



he sees everything and knows all the deeds and thoughts of humanity. He occasionally appears at crossroads at night to challenge warriors and learn the truth of their hearts. He is also the protector of slaves and severely punishes masters who ill-treat them. He rewards goodness by giving riches and fame, and he punishes wrongdoers by sending them sickness or by inflicting poverty and slavery on them.

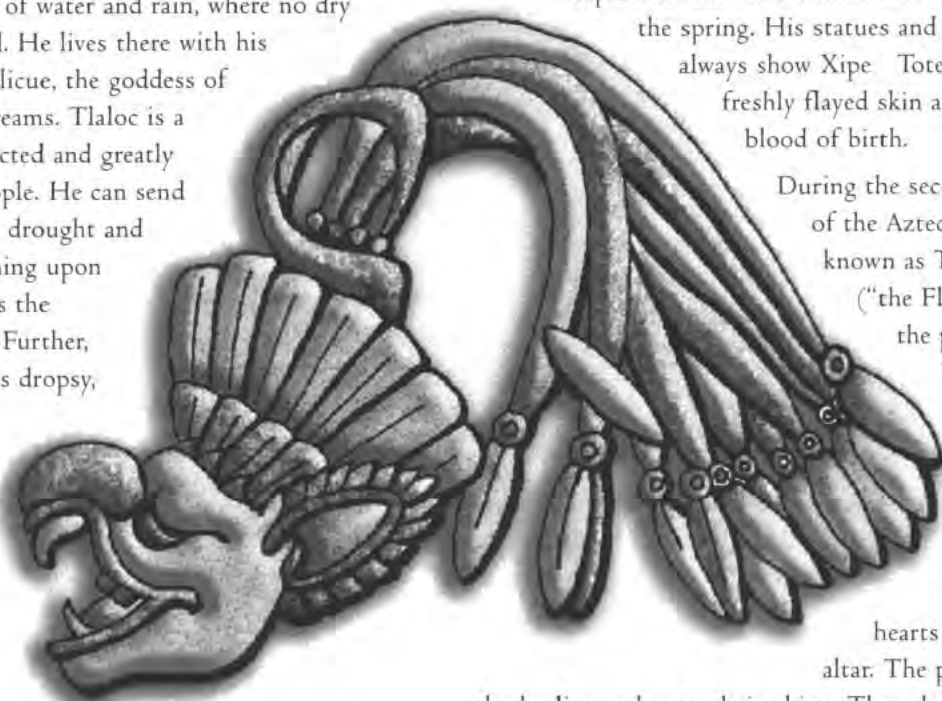
Every year, during the fifth month, the High Priest of Tezcatlipoca selects a young and handsome prisoner of war. For one year, the prisoner lives in princely luxury, pretending to be the god Tezcatlipoca. Four beautiful girls dressed as goddesses are chosen to be his companions, and he is given anything his heart desires. On the next year, just before the new prisoner is chosen, the old one climbs the steps of a small temple outside Oaxaca. At the top, he will be ritually sacrificed by the removal of his heart.

Tezcatlipoca's Domains are Magic, Trickery, and Evil. His preferred weapon is the scythe. His Alignment is Chaotic Evil.

Tlaloc

Tlaloc is the Aztec rain deity, a storm god especially identified with mountaintop shrines. His primary temple is located atop Mt. Tlaloc, where human victims are sacrificed at the turning points of each season in order to fertilize the land and bring rain for the coming year. In Tenochtitlan, another Tlaloc temple, shaped like a miniature version of the great mountain, shares the central plaza.

Tlaloc lives in a special heaven far above the Earth named Tlalocan. It is a heaven of water and rain, where no dry land at all can be found. He lives there with his companion, Chalchiuhtlicue, the goddess of freshwater lakes and streams. Tlaloc is a deity that is both respected and greatly feared by the Aztec people. He can send out the rain or provoke drought and hunger. He hurls lightning upon the Earth and unleashes the devastating hurricanes. Further, certain illnesses, such as dropsy, leprosy, and rheumatism, are caused by Tlaloc's anger. *Tlaloc's Domains of choice are Water, Chaos and Destruction. His Alignment is Chaotic Neutral. His preferred weapon is the flail.*



Tlazolteotl

Tlazolteotl is the lust goddess – the goddess of sex and inheritor of the wild moon. She is known as the “eater of sins” to whom the Aztecs confess their transgressions. Further, Tlazolteotl is the Aztec goddess of guilty pleasures. She has dominion over ritual cleansing, midwives, doctors, and of those who tell fortunes. At the end of a person's life, Tlazolteotl comes to him or her and asks for confession of all transgressions. If the mortal does so, she cleanses his or her soul, eating away the filth so that he or she might ascend into the Thirteen Heavens. She is depicted as having pitch black hair, and her body is waifish, looking like something between prepubescent and anorexic. Her skin is as pale as polished bone, and her eyes, with jaundiced pupils, are red as carrion. She is the personified Aztec belief that anything which can overwhelm and destroy us also has the power to heal and grant forgiveness. *Tlazolteotl grants access to the Strength, Animal, and Healing Domains. Her Alignment is Neutral. Her preferred weapon is a silver mace.*

Xipe Totec

Xipe Totec (whose name means “Our Lord, the Flayed One”) is the Aztec god of spring (the beginning of the rainy season) and of new vegetation. He is a fertility god in addition to having dominion over wealth and prosperity. Because of this, he is also the patron god of goldsmiths, jewelers, and the wealthy or prosperous. Xipe Totec is one of the most fearsome gods to look upon because he always wears the flayed skin of his sacrifices. This practice comes from the symbol of the new vegetation. Xipe Totec's skin represents the “new skin” that covers the Earth in the spring. His statues and stone masks always show Xipe Totec wearing this freshly flayed skin and covered in the blood of birth.

During the second ritual month of the Aztec calendar, a month known as Tlacaxipehualiztli (“the Flaying of Men”), the priests of Xipe Totec perform their sacrifices for the year. They kill all of their sacrificial victims by removing their hearts upon Xipe Totec's altar. The priests then flay the bodies and wear their skins. These human skins are dyed yellow and called *teocuilaquemil* (“golden clothes”).

Other victims are fastened to a frame and put to death by arrows; their blood dripping down symbolizes the fertile spring rains. *Xipe Totec grants access to the following Domains: Plant, Death, and Fire. He is Chaotic Neutral, and his preferred weapon is a harvester's sickle.*

Xochiquetzal

The goddess, Xochiquetzal ("Flowered Feather"), is the personification of love, beauty, and flowers. She is the patron of marriages and of prostitutes.

Xochiquetzal is also the goddess of flower and song and of the arts.

She is the most charming of the Aztec deities and her retinue consists of butterflies and birds.

Every eight years, a feast is held in her honor. All the celebrants wear masks that resemble animals and flowers.

Xochiquetzal is inspiration, beauty, and gentle love – things not often seen

in Aztec culture but revered nonetheless. She brought textiles to her people and is the goddess of weavers. She is often accompanied by a hummingbird or an ocelot. She is an intimate friend of Quetzalcoatl. Unlike other gods, Xochiquetzal never ages, and her beauty never fades.

During the Aztec festival in the honor of Xochiquetzal, a beautiful young woman is chosen by craftsmen and artisans to represent the goddess. This young woman is then sacrificed by the priests and flayed. Her skin is worn by a man who sits at a loom and pretends to weave while the craftsmen dance around her in animal costumes. The ceremony is completed with sacrificial bloodletting and a ritual bath. *Xochiquetzal provides spells of the Magic, Plant, and Protection Domains. Her Alignment is Chaotic Good.* She has no preferred weapon.

Magic

There are three kinds of magical practitioners among the Aztecs: priests, shamans, and sorcerers (also known as the Nagual). The type of magic practiced does not determine whether and individual is innately good or evil; there are as many evil priests as there are good Nagual, and most shamans are of a more neutral demeanor. The Aztecs do not judge magic based solely on its practitioner, but they are certainly taught

that priestly magic is holy, divine, and inspired, while shamans and Nagual wield banal, common, and heathen forms of magic with no true religion or inspiration behind their practices. Such magicians are mistrusted in most

Aztec cities and tend to keep their abilities secret rather than be shunned or treated as "false prophets of the Gods."

It is not illegal to practice non-priestly magic, but neither is it respected by the Aztec people. Most true shamans hide their abilities under a veneer of hedge-learning and healing rather than admit that their abilities are actually magical. They rarely cast spells in public and are shy about revealing their true powers to those people that they do not know well.



Priests

The most common practitioners of magic in the Aztec world are the priests.

Powerful nobles of great religious fervor are called into the priesthood to dedicate their lives to the temple of the gods or to an individual deity of their choice. These priests are the chosen voices of the gods on Earth, and they are gifted with powers beyond those of normal mortals in order to fulfill and protect the gods' interests.

Aztec priests are expected to educate, lead, and keep religious order in the community. The highest of the priests, or the chief priest, is the *tlatoami*. There is one for each major temple within a city, and also a singular High Priest (*Tlatoamiltic*) for the entire priesthood of each god. The main priest of a city or temple is given great social status and treated very well. They are always involved in serious decisions or undertakings of their cities and are asked for advice and blessings when the city goes to war, builds a new major structure, or makes other serious decisions. A priest's duties include holding rituals, making appearances at the festivals which mark the annual cycle, and observing and recording the movements of the stars. No one is allowed to eat with a *tlatoami*, who must take his meals in private, and no one of less standing than a city's governor or military general is allowed to look a *Tlatoamiltic* directly in the eye.

The highest rank a priest can hold is the *Teobuatzin*. He is the high priest of all religions, usually (but not always) chosen from the priests of Huitzilopochtli. The *Teobuatzin* lives in

Tenochtitlan, and coordinates with the Emperor for the benefit of the entire Aztec nation. All priests, regardless of the god they serve, give tribute and obey the commands of the *Teohuatzin*, and there is a great deal of political infighting when the position is open to a successor. The *Teohuatzin* is the priest who interprets major and significant astrological events (such as eclipses and comets), and who runs the major festivals.

Temple workers may come from any of the social classes, but only nobles can be priests. The highest of the priests are automatically members of the upper nobility and are treated as kings and emperors themselves. Those who studied for the priesthood are expected to know specialized skills. It is common for priests to be trained as astronomers to study the sky or to be educated in writing in order to become painters and record-keepers for the temple's codices.

Priests wear very specific robes and possess ornamental garb for special occasions, sacrifices, and other events. Those who perform the actual sacrifice of human victims commonly paint the individuals with red and black paint in symbolic fashions that will please the gods. The red symbolizes blood and new life, while the black represents the evils that the individual carries upon their soul. The priests who conduct the sacrifices wear black robes, ornamented with the symbols of their specific god and priesthood. Witnesses (nobles who are required to participate and must watch each death from a stone throne in the temple) often wear masks to symbolize their humility before the face of the gods.

Shamans

A shaman is a primitive form of priest connected to the gods but not a direct servant of their power. Such magic is linked very directly to the earth, the natural cycle, and the "common human being." Most shamans work with the power of the *tonali*, the sacred sites of the earth that spread their power in mystic lines throughout Mexico and the Empire. The earth tonal has its own magic and power. Animal spirit guides, allies, power spots, rituals and so forth belong to the realm of *tonali*. This is very different than working as godly priests or with the sorcerous powers of the Nagual.

The shamans of the Aztecs are known for their commitment to their communities. They lead very sedentary lives, choosing a territory (usually one with several small villages or some other feature) as their primary locale and almost never leave that area unless they are in dire need. They do not charge for their work but rely on the generosity of the locals whom they assist. There is usually a location – such as a small grove or a larger, bowl-like rock – where offerings to

the shamans are left by local villagers in thanks for their efforts on behalf of the community. Shamans are usually poorer than the people of their community because they must complete twice the work: they must spend their time tending their own trade and feeding their families, and they must perform the work of the shaman-healer, which is not paid but relies on offerings from those who can afford to give.

The goal of a shaman is to keep, or restore, the balance of nature – humanity's unity with the Earth, the gods, and the natural cycle. They work with opposites: sacred and mundane, spirit and matter, the self and the divine. These things must be balanced for nature – and therefore humanity – to thrive.

Sorcerers (Nagual)

In the Aztec tradition the wizard, or sorcerer, is called the Nagual. Stalking, recapitulation, gathering power, stopping the world, and awakening the dreamers are some of the practices of the Nagual, who are often warlike men and women who learn the ways of magic as well as the methods of war. It takes many years for an apprentice Nagual to walk the Avenue of the Dead (to learn the practices of an experienced sorcerer). They must master each element of magic from transmutation to evocation (the Chola), and they must learn the way of the warrior. Many of the Nagual choose to join the Jaguar Knights, the stalkers or killers of dreams, or to follow the way of the Eagle Knights, the creators of new dreams. They learn the ways of the impeccable warrior who conquers fear. They learn the mastery of intent, which enables magic to happen. They learn how to ascend through the sun to transmute out of this dream at the Pyramid of the Sun.

Nagual are ruthless, using anything (including fear) to push the world out of its dream and into the next step of reality. Their basis is reason, and logic rules them. A Nagual has neither time nor room for compassion and no energy to waste on emotion or merciful action. Reason needs harsh methods to break the most basic agreements of this dream. The path of the warrior is led by the mind, not the heart; it is a path of remembrance of one's true nature, of blood and toil.

Nagual is a magical tradition that is considered impure by the more traditionalist priests and shamans of Aztlan. They are occasionally allowed to practice as street magicians in the major cities of the Aztec nation, but only when it is evident that there is no real "magic" occurring. Any who are discovered to be doing more than sleight of hand types of tricks are persecuted severely. Nagual do not tend to practice Blood Magic or make sacrifices because their powers do not come from a deific entity that must be appeased. They believe instead that all power comes from individuals, from

Dream of the Raven

A Nagual almost always begins the path of the sorcerer under the direction of a powerful dream. Dreams are very important to the Nagual, and they take all such visions very seriously. They believe that when a warrior becomes fully aligned to the Eternal Dream he or she has command of the entire world's reality. Aztecs believe that the Creator of the Nagual is the Raven, an aspect of Tezcatlipoca.

their will, and from their ability to shape the dream around them which is "reality." They may use blood in their rituals, but it almost always blood drawn from self-sacrifice.

Nagual is a very controversial tradition, and many Aztecs believe them to be demon-worshippers or sorcerers who wish only to create evil and steal souls for their infernal masters. Although some Nagual do follow dark paths and serve such creatures, this is not typical behavior. However, lore and mythology suggest that a Nagual is either a powerful magician, a natural spirit or a demon, or some dark power released from the nine hells to plague the material world. All of the legends agree that such men and women are immensely powerful, and a wise Nagual will use the fear of such things to his or her own benefit when faced with it.

A Nagual is supposed to cause mischief at every opportunity, frightening or tricking others out of their simple belief in the "dream" that is reality. They risk anything, and some are willing to prove their point with extreme methods involving life and death. Many Nagual worship Tezcatlipoca, Mictlantecuhli, or Tlazolteco for their aspects of opening the eyes of the world and showing them the truth that lies beyond appearances. Nagual possess a bag full of tricks and knowledge, and are rarely afraid to use their power when they believe it will not be witnessed by the authorities. Their magic has both positive and negative aspects: they are known for protection and cleaning of bad energy when they are being beneficial, and for hexes, curses and varied damaging, binding, and controlling spells when they are feeling unfavorable toward their subject.

Part 4: Aztec Characters



This portion of the book contains new Character Classes for your Aztec campaigns. There are several standard classes and a few new Prestige Classes from which to choose. The following classes are available from the standard game: Cleric, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, and Rogue. In addition, the Blackguard and Loremaster Prestige Classes from the standard game may be chosen. Finally, all of the NPC Classes are available. All of the material

in this part of the book is designated Open Game Content for license purposes.

New Character Classes

Shaman

Aztec Shamans fulfill an important role in society. Rather than interpreting the will of the gods and making sacrifices to appease them like priests do, a Shaman strives to maintain the balance of nature and humanity's relationship to it. It is the job of these individuals to sort out disharmonies in the natural order, deal with encroachments of predatory animals and monsters, and heal the people of their communities. Each typically chooses a village or similar community over which he or she keeps watch, and solves the problems of the people who live there.

Shamans make good adventurers, but the campaign needs to be focused around their protection of the village or them embarking on a quest for the common good. Otherwise, their being tied to the location of their village makes them better suited to be NPC's.

Shamans cast Divine spells in the same manner as Druids. Table 4-1 lists the spells to which Shamans have access. The number spells they can cast per day is listed on Table 4-3.

Hit Die: d4

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int Modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int Modifier

Class Skills: Alchemy, Animal Empathy, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Handle Animal, Heal, Intuit Direction, Jump, Knowledge (Nature), Swim, Wilderness Lore

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Shamans are skilled with knives and with staves.

Starting Gold: 5d4

Class Features: Shamans gain Class Features at a rate shown on Table 4-2.

Nature Sense (Ex): Shamans can identify plants and animals with perfect accuracy. The character also can determine if water is safe to drink.

Venom Immunity (Ex): Upon reaching 10th Level, a Shaman becomes immune to all organic poisons.

Nagual

Feared by most Aztecs for both their blasphemy and their power, the Nagual is a sorcerer bent on shaking the world out of its dream and into the next level of reality. These characters believe in the power of the individual to craft the world around himself or herself – a sort of Nietzschean Will to Power many centuries before the German philosopher. This idea is extremely dangerous. The gods are easily angered, and blood sacrifice is necessary to keep the sun in the sky. If

Table 4-1: Shaman Spells (cont.)

4th-Level

Cure Serious Wounds
Dispel Magic
Freedom of Movement
Repel Vermin
Summon Nature's Ally IV

5th-Level

Atonement
Commune with Nature
Cure Critical Wounds
Hallow
Summon Nature's Ally V

6th-Level

Find the Path
Healing Circle
Ironwood
Stone Tell
Summon Nature's Ally VI

7th-Level

Control Weather
Heal
Summon Nature's Ally VII
True Seeing

Table 4-1: Shaman Spells

0-Level

Cure Minor Wounds
Detect Magic
Detect Poison
Guidance
Know Direction
Mending
Purify Food and Drink
Resistance

1st-Level

Calm Animals
Cure Light Wounds
Detect Animals and Plants
Endure Elements
Goodberry
Summon Nature's Ally I

2nd-Level

Delay Poison
Hold Animal
Resist Elements
Softens Earth and Stone
Speak with Animals
Summon Nature's Ally II
Warp Wood
Wood Shape

3rd-Level

Cure Moderate Wounds
Diminish Plants
Neutralize Poison
Plant Growth
Protection from Elements
Remove Disease
Speak with Plants
Stone Shape
Summon Nature's Ally III

everyone thought as the Nagual do, the gods' wrath would be more terrible than anyone could imagine. The Nagual, of course, claim that this is only an illusion – a dream from which all people must awaken.

These characters are not mere wizards, though. They are also fierce warriors. They believe that fear is one of many

Table 4-2: Shaman Class Features

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Class Features
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Nature Sense
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Bonus Metamagic Feat
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Bonus Metamagic Feat
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Venom Immunity
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	
11	+5	+3	+3	+7	
12	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	Bonus Metamagic Feat
13	+6/+1	+4	+4	+8	
14	+7/+2	+4	+4	+9	
15	+7/+2	+5	+5	+9	
16	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	Bonus Metamagic Feat
17	+8/+3	+5	+5	+10	
18	+9/+3	+6	+6	+11	
19	+9/+3	+6	+6	+11	
20	+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Bonus Metamagic Feat

ways to shake the world, and prowess in battle is a means to that end. Thus, they train to fight, and many of them seek positions among the Jaguar and Eagle Knights.

While they are powerful and extremely useful to a party of adventurers, Nagual must be very cautious with whom they associate and to whom they reveal their powers. No proper priest of the Aztec pantheon will tolerate one of these infidels and will seek to use offender's blood as an offering of apology to the gods for the affront the Nagual causes.

Hit Die: d8

Skill Points at 1st Level: (4 + Int Modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 4 + Int Modifier

Class Skills: Alchemy, Bluff, Climb, Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Escape Artist, Heal, Hide, Innuendo, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (Arcana), Perform, Sense Motive, Swim, Tumble

Weapon and Armor Proficiencies: Nagual are proficient with Simple and Martial Weapons.

Starting Gold: 2d4 x 10

Class Features: Nagual gain Class Features at a rate shown on Table 4-4.

Spellcasting (Sp): Nagual cast spells like a Sorcerer. That is, they receive a certain number of Arcane Spells per day, but they do not memorize them as Wizards do. The number of spells per day a Nagual can cast is listed on Table 4-5. Because they bend reality, a Nagual is not limited in his or her spell selection like a Sorcerer is. The character may cast any spell to which he or she has access so long as the Nagual has a spell slot open for it.

Seeds of Revolution (Sp): The character begins to be able to pass on the doctrine of another reality. By making a Perform Skill check at DC 15, he or she can charm another character into performing a specific task. The action cannot directly harm the target character, but

otherwise there are no restrictions. The victim gets a Will Save at DC 10 + the Charisma Bonus of the Nagual to resist the effects. The duration of this power is 24 hours. A Nagual can use this ability once per day for every

three Class Levels he or she has.

Stirring the Sleeper (Sp): Nagual with this ability can influence others' perceptions of reality by interfering with actions that the target knows should succeed (or fail). Three times per day, the Nagual can force another character to re-roll a throw of the dice. This can be an attack roll, a Saving Throw, or Skill check. The Nagual chooses which result the victim keeps.

Pulling Back the Veneer (Sp): The Nagual is unfazed by the illusions of this world. He or she is now immune to the effects of charm spells, sleep spells, and illusions.

The Awakening (Sp): At this stage, the character begins to have some control over the universe around him or her. Three times per day, the character can add +20 to any die roll he or she makes. The Nagual simply asserts his or her will over reality and forces a particular event to occur as he or she likes.

Impose Reality (Sp): The Nagual now has complete control over the world around him or her, at least to a point. The character determines what happens on any die roll. He or she can also change the weather, the appearance of his or her surroundings, or anything else imaginable. However, this is extremely draining and takes considerable willpower. To perform this feat, the character must make a Will Save at DC 35. Every 10 minutes, the character takes 1 point of temporary Constitution Damage and must make another Will Save at DC 30 to maintain the state. Characters who have their Con scores reduced to 0 die. Otherwise, the Nagual recovers Constitution as he or she would normal Ability Damage. This power is only usable once per day, and most Nagual choose to employ only rarely owing to the great physical strain it places upon them.

Prestige Classes

Eagle and Jaguar Knights

The Eagle and Jaguar Knights are the two most respected classes of warriors in the Aztec lands. For many years, there has been a rivalry between these two groups since each one wishes to prove that its method of warfare is the most effective. At times, this competition has turned quietly bloody, but war has always loomed close enough on the horizon to prevent the factions from actively battling one another.

The Eagle Knights of Huitzilopochtli and the Jaguar Knights of Tezcatlipoca are the two largest orders of warriors in the Aztec cities, but they accept very few petitioners into their ranks each year. No more than a few thousand warriors actually serve in these legions because only the finest and most dedicated soldiers in the Aztec nation are inducted. The Eagle Knights hold their trials on the Summer Equinox each year, taking no more than 50 young Aztecs into their ranks; the Jaguar Knights hold their tests on the Winter Equinox and accept less than half that number.

Table 4-3: Shaman Spells per Day

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
4	5	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
5	5	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
6	5	3	3	2	-	-	-	-
7	6	4	3	2	1	-	-	-
8	6	4	3	3	2	-	-	-
9	6	4	4	3	2	1	-	-
10	6	4	4	3	3	2	-	-
11	6	5	4	4	3	2	1	-
12	6	5	4	4	3	3	2	-
13	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1
14	6	6	5	4	4	3	3	2
15	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2
16	6	6	6	5	4	4	3	3
17	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3
18	6	6	6	6	5	4	4	3
19	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	4
20	6	6	6	6	6	5	4	4



Eagle Knights

Eagle Knights serve Huitzilopochtli and are honored and respected members of his priesthood and of the faith of the sun god. They are the noble defenders of the Aztec Empire, the heroes and idols of the society.

Eagle Knights are extremely honorable, preferring death to any breach of their oath or their vows to the priesthood of Huitzilopochtli. They use force, intelligence, and virtue to win battles and are often found both at the

Table 4-4: Nagual Class Features

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Class Features
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Spellcasting
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Seeds of Revolution
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Stirring the Sleeper
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	
8	+6/+1	+2	+2	+6	
9	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	
10	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7	Pulling Back the Veneer
11	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7	
12	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	
13	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	
14	+10/+5	+4	+4	+9	
15	+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9	The Awakening
16	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	
17	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	
18	+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	
19	+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	
20	+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Impose Reality

head of armies and as bodyguards for nobles and high priests of their faith.

Requirements: Alignment of Lawful Good or Lawful Neutral, Base Attack Bonus +4, Iron Will Feat, Diplomacy Skill: 4 Ranks, Heal Skill: 2 Ranks, Knowledge (Religion) Skill: 4 Ranks, Devotee of Huitzilopochtli, Code of Honor (see below).

Hit Die: d12

Skill Points per Level: 2 + Int Modifier

Class Skills: Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (Religion), Listen, Search.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Eagle Knights are proficient with all Simple and Martial Weapons, with all Armors, and with all Shields.

Restriction – Code of Honor: Eagle Knights must swear to a code of honor, and, if they fail in their adherence to it, they

lose all levels gained in this Prestige Class. These abilities can only be regained by going on a dangerous quest in the name of Huitzilopochtli and then sacrificing 100 captured prisoners for each transgression that the knight has made against the code.

Class Features: Eagle Knights gain Class Features at a rate shown on Table 4-6.

Detect Chaos (Sp): The character can use this ability at will. It is otherwise identical to the spell of the same name.

Divine Grace (Su): Eagle Knights are blessed by Huitzilopochtli as his servants. They may therefore add their Charisma Modifiers to all Saving Throws.

Aura of Courage (Ex): The character is immune to the effects of Fear. Additionally, any allies within 10 feet of the Eagle Knight gain a +4 Morale Bonus to Saving Throws against Fear.

Turn Undead (Su): Eagle Knights can rely on their devotion to the sun god to strengthen them against the undead. They can Turn Undead as if they were Clerics two levels below their Class Level. The character can use this ability a number of times per

days equal to his or her Charisma Modifier + 3.

Spellcasting (Sp): Upon reaching 4th Level, Eagle Knights gain the ability to cast a limited number of spells. These are Divine spells, and they are drawn from a narrow list of choices. Table 4-7 shows the number of spells per day that the character can cast. Table 4-8 lists the spells from which an Eagle Knight can choose.

Eye of the Eagle (Ex): The character's eyes become as sharp as Huitzilopochtli's favored creature, the eagle. Upon gaining this ability, the Eagle Knight gains a +2 Racial Bonus to all sight-based Skill checks. When the character gains Improved Eye of the Eagle at Level 9, this bonus increases to +4.

Scream of Rage (Ex): By shrieking savagely immediately before going into an attack, the Eagle Knight can unnerve an opponent. The target character must be within 10 feet of the Eagle Knight and be able to hear. An affected character

Table 4-5: Nagual Spells per Day

Level	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	6	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	6	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	6	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	6	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	6	4	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	6	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	6	4	3	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
9	6	4	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
10	6	5	4	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
11	6	5	4	3	3	2	-	-	-	-
12	6	5	4	4	3	2	1	-	-	-
13	6	5	5	4	3	3	2	-	-	-
14	6	6	5	4	4	3	2	1	-	-
15	6	6	5	4	4	3	3	2	-	-
16	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1	-
17	6	6	6	5	4	4	3	3	2	-
18	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2	1
19	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	3	2
20	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	4	3	2

Jaguar Knights

Jaguar Knights serve Tezcatlipoca. Despite the misleading title, the warriors of the Jaguar are not knightly or noble in any form. They swear unceasing loyalty to their holy patron and to the Aztec people, but they are not honorable warriors. They use stealth, assassination, poison, and other means to gain victory over their enemies, stooping to any means in order to assure victory.

Requirements: Evil Alignment, Base Attack Bonus +4, Blind-Fighting Feat, Knowledge (Religion) Skill: 4 Ranks, Move Silently Skill: 4 Ranks, Devotee of Tezcatlipoca.

Hit Die: d8

Skill Points per Level: 4 + Int Modifier

Class Skills: Concentration, Climb, Hide, Intimidate, Intuit Direction, Knowledge (Religion), Listen, Move Silently, Search, Sense Motive, Spot.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Jaguar Knights are proficient with all Simple and Martial Weapons, with all Armors, and with all Shields.

makes a Will Save DC 15 + the Charisma Modifier of the Eagle Knight. Failure causes the target to suffer a -2 Morale Penalty to Initiative and AC for the duration of the engagement. Only one character can be affected at a time by this ability.

Huitzilopochtli's Shape (Sp): The character can now take the form of the sun god's sacred creature. He or she transforms into a Giant Eagle by simply willing it. The Eagle Knight may transform into the giant bird and back three times per day.

Table 4-6: Eagle Knight Class Features

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Class Features
1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Detect Chaos, Divine Grace
2	+2	+3	+0	+0	Aura of Courage
3	+3	+3	+1	+1	Turn Undead
4	+4	+4	+1	+1	Spellcasting
5	+5	+4	+1	+1	Bonus Feat
6	+6/+1	+5	+2	+2	Eye of the Eagle
7	+7/+2	+5	+2	+2	Scream of Rage
8	+8/+3	+6	+2	+2	Bonus Feat
9	+9/+4	+6	+3	+3	Improved Eye of the Eagle
10	+10/+5	+7	+3	+3	Huitzilopochtli's Shape

Class Features: Jaguar Knights gain all of the Class Features listed below. Table 4-9 describes the rate at which they are acquired.

Hide within Darkness (Ex): So nimble are the Jaguar Knights that they may add their Dexterity Modifiers to all Saving Throws, not just Reflex.

Table 4-7: Eagle Knight Spells per Day

Level	1	2	3	4
1	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-
4	1	-	-	-
5	1	-	-	-
6	2	1	-	-
7	2	1	-	-
8	3	2	1	-
9	3	2	1	-
10	4	3	2	1

Table 4-8: Eagle Knight Spell List

1st Level – Command, Endure Elements, Magic Weapon, Protection from Chaos, Sanctuary

2nd Level – Bull's Strength, Calm Emotions, Heat Metal, Remove Paralysis, Spiritual Weapon

3rd Level – Blindness, Magic Circle against Chaos, Searing Light, Magic Vestment

4th Level – Dismissal, Divine Power, Fire Shield, Order's Wrath

Code of the Eagle Knights

- Protect all innocents of the faith of Huitzilopochtli and defend the cities of the Aztecs with your life. Always be the last to leave a dangerous situation, protecting those who go before you from the foes at their back.
- Never break your word of honor, not even to one who is dishonorable.
- Have no pity toward those who will be killed in sacrifice to Huitzilopochtli. To prevent such a sacrifice is to insult the god himself.
- Do not turn away from a known enemy of the Aztec people. Refusing to finish a battle or putting off a fight for any reason is to acknowledge their superiority.
- Do not allow your allies to break their word, or otherwise defame the honor of the Aztec nation – except if they are Jaguar Knights, who may do so at their leisure in service to the gods.
- Never kill a priest of any religion. It is not the place of an Eagle Knight to steal the lives of the gods' chosen; such individuals should be taken to the temple of Huitzilopochtli so that their deaths may serve him directly.

Darkvision (Su): Tezcatlipoca has imbued his agents with many of the abilities of the feline creatures from which they take their name. So that they may be stealthier, he empowers them to see in the dark. Upon reaching 2nd Level, the character gains Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Step of Shadow (Ex): The character has become a master of stealth and is nearly impossible to track in urban and rural settings. Though the Jaguar Knight still leaves a trail in the wilderness, he or she otherwise moves through settled areas as though under the effects of a Pass Without Trace spell.

Spellcasting (Sp): Upon reaching 5th Level, Jaguar Knights gain the limited ability to cast spells. They choose these spells from a specific list, but they do not have to memorize them. Table 4-10 delineates the number of

Table 4-9: Jaguar Knight Class Features

Level	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Class Features
1	+1	+0	+2	+0	Hide within Darkness
2	+2	+0	+2	+1	Eyes of the Hunter
3	+3	+0	+3	+1	Bonus Feat
4	+4	+1	+3	+2	Step of Shadow
5	+5	+1	+4	+2	Spellcasting
6	+6/+1	+1	+4	+3	Sound of the Hunt
7	+7/+2	+2	+5	+3	Bonus Feat
8	+8/+3	+2	+5	+4	Cat-like Reflexes
9	+9/+4	+2	+6	+4	Improved Sound of the Hunt
10	+10/+5	+3	+6	+5	Tezcatlipoca's Shape

Cat-like Reflexes (Su): By this stage, the Jaguar Knight is superhumanly in tune with the environment. The character does not provoke Attacks of Opportunity and cannot be caught Flat-Footed.

Tezcatlipoca's Shape (Sp): The character is now capable of taking the shape of one of the great cats themselves. Three times per day, he or she can transform into a Jaguar (use the stats for a leopard in the standard game) and back.

spells per day that a Jaguar Knight can cast. Table 4-11 lists the spells available to the class.

Sound of the Hunt (Ex): Like the great cats they revere, Jaguar Knights have extremely fine hearing. A character that gains this ability gains a +2 Racial Bonus on all - hearing-based Skill checks. Upon acquiring Improved Sound of the Hunt, this bonus increases to +4.

Table 4-10: Jaguar Knight Spells per Day

Level	1	2	3
1	-	-	-
2	-	-	-
3	-	-	-
4	-	-	-
5	1	-	-
6	1	-	-
7	2	1	-
8	2	1	-
9	3	2	1
10	3	2	1

Table 4-11: Jaguar Knight Spell List

1st Level — Change Self, Comprehend Languages, Detect Secret Doors, Silent Image, Ventriloquism

2nd Level — Blur, Hypnotic Pattern, Invisibility, Minor Image, Misdirection

3rd Level — Displacement, Invisibility Sphere, Major Image, Tongues



Part 5: Outfitting the Character



This section of the book contains new Feats, Skills, Magic Items, and other things for your character unique to the Aztec setting. All of the material in this portion of the book is designated Open Game Content for license purposes.

New Feats

Eidetic Memory [General]

Characters with this Feat can recall extraordinary details.

Benefit: This Feat grants an additional +4 on all Knowledge or other Skill checks pertaining to the precise recall of information.

Jack of All Trades [Rogue]

The character has picked up a wide variety of knowledge that allows him or her to do more than the average person.

Benefit: Rogues with this feat can attempt any Skill in which they do not have points without any Cross-Class penalties. Thus, Skills that require training can be employed even if the character would otherwise be considered Untrained. Although this Feat allows the character to make a Skill check when he or she would otherwise not be allowed, it does not convey any further benefit.

Jaguar's Pounce [General]

The character has learned to emulate the hunting instincts of a great cat and employ them in combat.

Prerequisites: Improved Initiative

Benefit: Like the deadly Jaguar, the character pinpoints the best moment to strike. At the beginning of combat, the user may add +2 to either Initiative or on the first attack roll. This decision must be made before Initiative is determined.

Monkey's Path [General]

Like the monkey, the character has learned to move through the jungle with ease.

Benefit: This Feat allows the user to leave very little trace of his or her passing when traveling through forest or jungle terrain. Those attempting to track him or her suffer a -3 Circumstance Penalty to the die roll.

Precise Timing [General]

Prerequisite: Intelligence 12+

Benefit: Characters with this Feat are proficient in determining the exact time of day and month with only a few glances at a day or nighttime sky. With this ability, they can accurately predict the most fortunate time for any endeavor. During the appointed hour, the character may add +1 to a single roll, provided the favorable hour was determined in advance.

Poison Resistance [General]

The character is naturally more resistant to venom and therefore difficult to poison.

Benefit: All Saving Throws made against poison gain a +2 Resistance Bonus.

Table 5-1: Restricted Equipment

Weapons

Gauntlet
Gauntlet, spiked
Morningstar
Crossbow (any)
Pick, light
Rapier
Scimitar
Trident
Glaive
Guisarme

Grenade-like Weapons

Alchemist's fire

Exotic Weapons

All

Armor

Chainmail
Breastplate
Splint Mail
Half-plate
Full-plate
Locked Gauntlet

Goods and Services

Backpack
Map or scroll case
Lantern, bullseye
Lantern, hooded
Ram, portable
Sealing wax
Signet Ring
Soap
Spyglass

Class Tools & Skill Kits

Alchemist's Lab
Hourglass
Magnifying glass

Mounts and Related Gear

Barding
Bit and bridle
Dog, riding
Horse
Saddle
Saddle, exotic
Saddlebags
Wagon

This Feat may be taken multiple times.

Equipment

Much of the equipment in the standard game isn't appropriate to the Aztec setting. It is geared towards standard Western Fantasy with a medieval bent. Therefore, a list of restricted equipment follows so that your characters will be more authentically outfitted.

The Aztecs have no horses, mules or donkeys. Therefore, all fighting styles that require a mount are inappropriate to this setting. All equipment, barding, and other items that are specifically for horse care or use are also inappropriate, as are the Mounted Archery, Spirited Charge and other Ride-based fighting Feats.

Magic Items

Blood Ring

This intricately-created ring is forged of bronze and inlaid with mosaic pieces of obsidian, ruby, and moonstone. It is an evil creation, radiating an almost sentient presence; when it has been recently fed, all those within 5 feet can sense its malevolent activity. These rings require a tithe of blood in order to activate – blood which must be sacrificed by the wearer in order to fuel the ring's powers. When activated with a command word, thorns grow from the interior of the ring, dealing 1d2 points of damage to the wearer. Once activated, the ring places the user into a berserk rage like Barbarian Rage ability from the standard game. The user temporarily receives a +4 Magical Bonus to Strength and Constitution and a +2 Morale Bonus to Will Saves but suffers a -2 Circumstance Penalty to AC.

While raging, the user of this ring can't use skills or abilities that require patience and concentration, such as moving silently or casting spells. This fit of rage lasts for 10 rounds, and the user cannot end it voluntarily. At the end of the duration, the user is Fatigued. The Hit Points drained by the ring cannot be restored by any natural means. They are lost forever.

Caster Level: 16th

Prerequisites: Forge Ring, Bull's Strength, Cat's Grace, Minor Creation

Market Price: 8000 gold

Weight: 6.5 lb.

Eagle and Jaguar Bowls

Just as the military elite are divided into the Eagle Knights of the day and the Jaguar Knights of the night, the priests at the great temples of Cholula and other religious sites divide their offerings into two sections. The Eagle Bowl, formed of

Atlatl

Aztecs warriors are extremely proficient with spears, javelins, and other hurled weapons. They particularly use a device called an atlatl, which looks like a wooden spoon and is designed to help hurl a short javelin from the warrior's shoulder. Using an atlatl increases the range and force of thrown spears. An atlatl will add an additional 50% to the range increment of a javelin and also increases the damage of the attack by +2. However, it requires a full action to reload.

Obsidian Weapons

Aztec warriors make many of their weapons out of obsidian, sacrificing the weapon's stability for an incredible sharpness. These weapons must make checks against a DC of 5 each time they are used to strike anything. Failure causes them to shatter. However, obsidian weapons are amazingly sharp and add an additional 4 points of damage to any attack. Any weapon that does slashing or piercing damage may be made of obsidian.

gold and used during the day, is for sacrifices that will be used to call upon good powers. The Eagle Bowl holds the powers of fertility, protection, and law, and all blood placed within it calls out to those strengths. The Jaguar Bowl, made of obsidian, is used for sacrifices of vengeance, war, or to appease an already angered god. The abilities of the two bowls are very different, although they are activated in a similar manner.

Each depicts the totem creature bearing a shallow receptacle

on its back for receiving sacrificial hearts. In order to activate these bowls, a human heart – freshly removed from its body – must be burned within. In the smoke that rises from the bloody sacrifice, an omen will be seen of the god's answer to the priest's question. These bowls are not "wish-bowls" but rather are a means of requesting that a higher power become involved in the personal affairs of mortals – a dangerous proposition at best. Each bowl may only be invoked once per month.

Eagle Bowl: Visions from sacrifices to the golden bowl grant the receiver three luck re-rolls to be used within the next seven days. These re-rolls may not all be used on the same action, and the result of the second roll must be kept regardless of whether it is better or worse.

Huitzilopochtli watches over all those who receive this blessing, and his servants are quick to punish those who act selfishly or who allow his people to be harmed through their actions while using such a gift. If the recipient in any way defames Huitzilopochtli's name or does not act with honor, the three luck re-rolls become bad luck rolls, which may be used at any point the GM chooses in order to force a player to re-roll on a successful action.

Jaguar Bowl: The Jaguar Bowl sends its sacrifices to the dark god, Tezcatlipoca, and all those who receive his blessings know that his patronage can be a difficult burden to bear. Visions from sacrifices to the obsidian bowl allow the recipient to temporarily re-allocate up to 10 of his or her Skill Points, exceeding any restrictions, and to maintain this re-adjustment for seven days. At the end of this period, the recipient's Skill Points revert to their original state. If the recipient in any way defames Tezcatlipoca's name or explains his or her task to others during this seven-day period, the 10 Skill Points are lost forever.

Caster Level: 12th

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Augury, Clairvoyance/Clairaudience, Divination

Market Price: 12,000 gold

Weight: 1.5 lb (each)

Hummingbird Stones

These small, brightly-colored stones are found only in the deepest forests of the Aztec people. They are uniquely heavy and pointed like chips of obsidian.



Handling them requires caution because they are quite capable of slicing open the fingers of the unwary (Reflex Save, DC 5). The stones are approximately one to two inches in diameter and twice as heavy as the normal sling bullet. When used in a sling, hummingbird stones do Piercing Damage instead of Bludgeoning. However, due to their weight, their range is half that of a normal sling bullet.

Michlantechutli's Conch Horn

This is the conch that Quetzalcoatl used to win the bones of the Earth from Michlantechutli (see sidebar, page 36). The Conch Horn resides in the great pyramid of



Quetzalcoatl in Cholula, protected by the stone serpent guardians and the fanatic faithful. It is a beautiful pinkish shell with irregular holes along the central core and golden lacing on the edges of the horn's lip. When sounded, its call can be heard for miles, echoing like a pure clarion note of thunder in the skies. Sounding the horn once causes a great tremor to shake the earth within 60' as per the Earthquake spell. If it is sounded twice, all mortal creatures within 30' except the horn's blower must make a Will Save at DC 19 or be paralyzed by its call. These individuals are aware and breathe normally but cannot take any physical actions, even speech. They can, however, execute purely mental actions (such as casting a spell with no components).

Caster Level: 16th

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Earthquake, Hold Person

Market Price: 35,000 gold

Weight: 3 lbs.

Serpent Skin Cloak

The Serpent Skin Cloak is made entirely of the scaled hides of serpent quetzal, the solitary and elusive creatures of the deep forest. The cloak shimmers with scales and is trimmed in serpent feathers. It is illegal for anyone other than a nobleman to wear this cloak, and commoners found in possession of such a rare and magnificent item are often accused of murdering nobles in order to steal the cloak.

The wearer benefits from a +5 AC Bonus. The Maximum Dex Bonus the character can employ while dressed in it is +6. There is no Armor Check Penalty while wearing the cloak and only a 10% chance of Arcane Spell Failure. Additionally, the wearer may cast the Haste spell once per week.

Caster Level: 8th

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Haste, Shield of Faith

Market Price: 6,000 gold

Weight: 6.5 lb.

New Spells

Drain Power

(Evocation: Air)

Level: 5

Components: Verbal, Somatic, Divine Focus

Casting Time: 2 actions

Range: 10 feet

Effect: Ray

Target: One enchanted item

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Reflex negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

By use of this spell, the caster can attempt to drain a Rod, Staff, or Wand of all of its magical power. The spell sends out a bluish beam of light that bathes the enchanted object completely, draining it of magical power with its touch. If successful, the device will be completely disenchanting, and rendered completely useless. Artifacts and unique Magic Items are temporarily disenchanting for one hour per Caster Level. For the spell to be successful, the caster must succeed at a Ranged Touch Attack.

Flames of Michlantechutli

(Abjuration)

Level: Cleric 1, Sor/Wiz 2

Components: Verbal, Somatic, Material

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature Touched

Duration: 2 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell creates a shimmering, magical field around the touched creature that causes damage to those who come too close to it or touch its flesh. The recipient's skin erupts into freezing flames, constantly emitting blue fire that inflicts 1d4 points plus an additional one point for every five levels of the caster of freezing damage on contact with unprotected flesh. Cold-based creatures are not affected. The Material Component is a small parchment with the image of Michlantechutli drawn on it in human blood.

Wind Blade

(Evocation: Air)

Level: 2

Components: Verbal, Somatic, Divine Focus

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Targets: Sword-like beam

Duration: 1 minute per level (D)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is similar to Flame Blade except that the blade formed by the casting is a blast of high-pressure air, controlled and maneuvered as if it were a thick sword. The blade deals 1d6 points of damage +1 per Class Level of the caster. It appears as a rippling field of air around the caster's hand and all arrows that pass within five feet of it suffer a -2 Deflection Penalty to their attack. Wind Blade has no effect on creatures of the Air Subtype but deals double damage to creatures of the Earth Subtype.



Part 6: Aztec Creatures

Below are monsters and animals unique to the Aztec world for use in your campaign.



Chitectl

The legendary Chitectl is considered mythical in many parts of the Aztec lands. Few are ever seen, and most Aztecs know of them

only through tales told of great warriors. The Chitectl are lizard-like beasts, capable of being trained and ridden as war steeds by exceptional heroes. Since they will not breed in captivity, there are very few Chitectl within the civilized lands of the Aztec tribes. Legend says that a warrior brave enough to face one down and bridle it with a rope made of quetzal feathers can tame such a creature for a short time, enlisting the Chitectl's aid on a specific mission. This is highly dangerous, however, since the Chitectl will go wild once more when the bridle is removed and may well eat its erstwhile master.

Chitectl (cont.)

Swallow Whole (Ex): A Chitectl can try to swallow a Small-sized or smaller opponent by making a successful Grapple check. The swallowed creature takes $2d8+6$ points of crushing damage per round plus 6 points of acid damage from the Chitectl's gizzard. A swallowed creature can cut its way out by using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to deal 12 points of damage to the gizzard, which is AC 18. The Chitectl's stomach can hold three Small or Five tiny opponents.

Trample (Ex): A Chitectl can trample Medium-sized or smaller creatures for $2d12+3$ points of damage. Opponents who do not make Attacks of Opportunity against the creature can attempt a Reflex Save at DC 20 to halve the damage.

Crest (Ex): This crest offers any rider a certain amount of cover, and all attacks against those immediately behind the lizard's raised crest suffer a -2 Deflection Penalty.

Chitectl

- Size:** Large Beast
- Hit Dice:** $4d10+12$ (34 hp)
- Initiative:** +2 (Dex)
- Speed:** 40 feet
- AC:** 16 (-1 Size, +2 Dex, +5 Natural Armor)
- Attacks:** Bite +6 melee ($1d8+3$); Rake +1 melee ($2d6+1$); 2 Claws +1 melee ($1d6+1$)
- Face/Reach:** 5 feet x 5 feet / 10 feet
- Special Attacks:** Swallow Whole, Trample
- Special Qualities:** Crest, Darkvision 60 feet, Low-Light Vision, Scent
- Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +2
- Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10
- Skills:** Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +2
- Feats:** None.
- Climate/Terrain:** Warm Jungle, Forest, Marsh
- Organization:** Solitary, Pair or Brood (3-5)
- Challenge Rating:** 4
- Treasure:** Standard
- Alignment:** Always Neutral
- Advancement:** 5-8 HD (Large), 9-12 HD (Huge)

Chitectl are large, four-legged lizards with tremendous teeth and raking claws. They most resemble horse-sized kimodo dragons, but with a large, multi-colored crest of skin behind their heads that grows erect when the Chitectl is upset or entering combat. Their thick hide is a greenish-blue color, blending in easily with the shadows of dense jungle or beneath the waves of slow-moving river tributaries. Although they are not truly amphibious, these creatures can hold their breath for up to 12 hours, and they often sleep under the waters of their favorite waterfall or lake. In the wild, Chitectl possess violent dispositions and savage temperaments, and they are fearsome predators. They are ruthless in the hunt, almost untiring, and extremely difficult to lose once they catch the scent of their prey.

These magnificent lizards are the spawn of the deepest jungles, born of the radiance of Huitzilopochtli on the first day his light struck the Earth. They are finely attuned to the ground beneath them and become uncomfortable if they pass over large caverns beneath the surface. They are extremely sensitive to tremors caused by earthquakes, volcanoes, or burrowing creatures and can sense such things as far as 30 yards away.

Chitectl take full advantage of their size and speed, ruthlessly pinning their prey with their massive bodies while they rake them with sharp claws. Swift and quiet, the Chitectl often stalks its prey from the deep cover of a river or jungle terrain, attacking only when an opportunity presents itself.

Chihuahua

The chihuahua is a common domestic animal among the Aztecs, and such animals are often kept as watchdogs and companions. An Aztec tale describes a faithful chihuahua that was not allowed to accompany his noble master into battle and, instead, followed him, standing guard over his master while the warrior slept. The faithful creature's ministrations saved the warrior from an assassination attempt while he was sleeping, and the dog was given much praise. Many families keep these small animals to help hunt and kill rodents and other pests, and it is considered a mark of honor for someone to raise and keep chihuahuas. They are especially beloved for their ability to entertain small children. Chihuahuas are not combat animals and are ineffective in battle. However, they are loyal and fairly intelligent and will often go for help if their owner is attacked.

Llama

The llama is a creature common to the high plains of South America. It is rarely encountered by Aztecs, but when obtained they are used as a beast of burden. It is capable of

Chihuahua

Size:	Tiny Animal
Hit Dice:	1/2 d8+1 (3 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	30 feet
AC:	14 (+2 Size, +2 Dex)
Attacks:	Bite +2 melee (1d4)
Face/Reach:	2 1/2 feet x 2 1/2 feet/0 feet
Special Attacks:	None
Special Qualities:	Game Design, Low-light Vision, Scent
Saves:	Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 5, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 14
Skills:	Listen +7, Spot +3, Swim +2
Feats:	None.
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate Land
Organization:	Solitary or Pack (3-8)
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually Neutral
Advancement:	1-4 HD (Tiny)

Game Design (Ex): While they are rarely given the opportunity, Chihuahuas are excellent game designers. In the future they will labor largely in obscurity but will make key contributions to some of the finest games around the turn of the 21st Century.

Skills: Chihuahuas receive a +6 Racial Bonus to all Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Llama

Size:	Medium Animal
Hit Dice:	2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative:	+2 (Dex)
Speed:	40 feet
AC:	13 (+2 Dex, +1 Natural Armor)
Attacks:	2 Hooves +3 melee (1d3+2)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 5 feet
Special Attacks:	Spit
Special Qualities:	Low-Light Vision, Scent
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 8
Skills:	Listen +4, Spot +6
Feats:	None.
Climate/Terrain:	Temperate Land
Organization:	Solitary or Herd (2-12)
Challenge Rating:	1/2
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Always Neutral
Advancement:	3-4 HD (Medium), 5-6 HD (Large)

Spit (Ex): A llama will spit in an opponent's face to blind it if the llama is cornered. Targets make Reflex Saves at DC 10. Failure causes the victim to be Blinded for 1 round. Llama Spit has a Range Increment of 1 foot.



being a riding beast for short periods of time. Llamas are smaller than horses and not as strong, but they are extremely dexterous and can handle difficult terrain with ease.

The llama is a useful creature, and its hair can be sheared and used to weave woolen garments for keeping warm in the winters. However, they are also bad-tempered and are perfectly capable of defending themselves against most mundane threats. Although llamas prefer to use their dexterity and speed to advantage, outrunning predators whenever possible, they will fight if cornered. A llama fights with a double-hoof attack, spitting into its opponents face in order to temporarily blind it so the llama can escape.

Lobison

The Nahuales (see below) are feared and reviled hunters of the night, but they are not alone. Nahuales are created by a lycanthropic master known as a Lobison. Even more terrible than the brood of vicious creatures they spawn in their wake, the Lobison are monsters of pure supernatural evil with no human tendencies or thought left in their cruel minds. A single Lobison can create hundreds of Nahuales, forming packs and using them to attack the helpless peasants of the Aztec lands. Without a Lobison to lead them, Nahuales are completely chaotic, incapable of restraining their impulses and instincts. A Lobison can dominate a pack of Nahuales, commanding them to perform its wishes no matter what their individual desires. Nahuales are completely incapable of disobeying the Lobison's will, following their orders even to the death.

Once, Lobison were Aztecs, but their human memories are long burned away by the curse they carry in their blood. Their eyes and hair shine pure silver in the light of the moon, and the touch of sunlight causes a Lobison to lose control, transforming into a giant silver coyote and fleeing to darkness without regard for safety or other concerns. Lobison are completely feral in their behavior, preferring to remain in their silvery coyote form over all others. They communicate with Nahuales via empathy and animal movements, communicating their desires to their followers without a word.

A Lobison is created through a rare conjunction of astrology and birth. The seventh son in a family (whereas the seventh daughter is doomed to be a witch), is tainted with the curse

Lobison

Size:	Large Aberration
Hit Dice:	10d8+50 (95 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	30 ft
AC:	17 (-1 Size, +4 Dex, +4 Natural Armor)
Attacks:	(as Human) Unarmed Strike +15/+10 melee (1d4+6 and Subdual) or (as Giant Coyote) Bite +15 melee (2d6+6 and Nahaule's Curse) and 2 Claws +10 melee (1d6+3 and Nahaule's Curse)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 10 feet
Special Attacks:	Improved Grab, Nahaule's Curse, Pounce, Trip
Special Qualities:	Damage Reduction 15/Silver, Darkvision 30 feet, Nahaule Empathy, Scent
Saves:	Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +8
Abilities:	Str 23, Dex 18, Con 21, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 20
Skills:	Balance +10, Hide +11, Intimidate +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +14, Spot +7*
Feats:	Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Power Attack
Climate/Terrain:	Any Mountains
Organization:	Solitary (or with pack of Nahaules 1-10)
Challenge Rating:	9
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always Neutral Evil
Advancement:	11-20 HD (Large), 21-30 HD (Huge)

of the Lobison. If he should ever fall to temptation or look upon his own face in a silvered mirror, the unfortunate will be lost to the beast within. At first, a newly created Lobison wanders in the hills and mountains, feeding mostly upon carrion. However, eventually it will come upon a human, and instantly attack. Once this first assault occurs, the Lobison will never truly be human again. The survivors of a Lobison attack then turn into Nahaule, but such circumstances are fairly rare because most people die in the claws and teeth of these ferocious creatures.

Lobison (cont.)

Improved Grab (Ex): A Lobison that hits with its Bite or Claw Attack may attempt to make a Grapple check as a Free Action without provoking an Attack of Opportunity. Creatures held by the Lobison suffer a -4 Circumstance Penalty to their AC's against the monster's attacks while held.

Nahaule's Curse (Su): Any humanoid hit by a Lobison's attack while in animal form must succeed at a Fortitude Save DC 15 or become cursed. The doomed individual becomes a Nahaule under the control of the Lobison that transformed it within 24 hours.

Nahaule Empathy (Ex): Lobison can communicate and empathize with other Lobison and Nahaules, no matter what form they are in. This gives the Lobison a +4 Racial Bonus to checks when influencing the animal's attitude and allows the communication of simple concepts and commands without speech.

Pounce (Ex): If a Lobison in coyote form leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a Full Attack even if it has already taken a Move Action.

Trip (Ex): A Lobison that hits with its Bite Attack can attempt to Trip its opponent as a Free Action without making a Touch Attack or provoking an Attack of Opportunity. If the attempt fails, the target cannot react to Trip the Lobison.

Skills: When in coyote or hawk form, a Lobison gains a +8 Racial Bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent. When in human form, the Lobison receives a +4 Racial Bonus to Spot checks.

Nahuale

Size:	Medium Aberration
Hit Dice:	6d8+18 (45 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	30 feet
AC:	13 (Dex)
Attacks:	(as Human) Unarmed Strike +9 melee (1d3+5 and Subdual) or (as Giant Coyote) Bite +9 melee (1d6+5 and Nahuale's Curse), 2 Claws +4 melee (1d4+2 and Nahaule's Curse)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 5 feet
Special Attacks:	Nahuale's Curse, Pounce, Trip
Special Qualities:	Damage Reduction 15/Silver, Darkvision 30 feet, Power of the Moon, Scent
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 21, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 18
Skills:	Hide +8, Intimidate +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +11, Spot +2*, Swim +3
Feats:	Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Any forest, hill, mountains or plain
Organization:	Solitary or Pack (3-6)
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always Chaotic Evil
Advancement:	7-12 HD (Medium), 13-18 HD (Large)

When a Lobison transforms, it assumes the shape of either a tremendous silver coyote or of a white hawk more than three times the size of any natural bird. The hawk form is simply for transportation and for stealth. It has little attack capacity, and so no Lobison chooses to fight while so transformed.

Lobison are extremely intelligent, using their innate knowledge of tactics and assault to toy with and destroy their enemies. They prefer to use their Nahaule servants to trap enemies, sacrificing their own allies in order to cause more suffering to their foes.

Nahuale

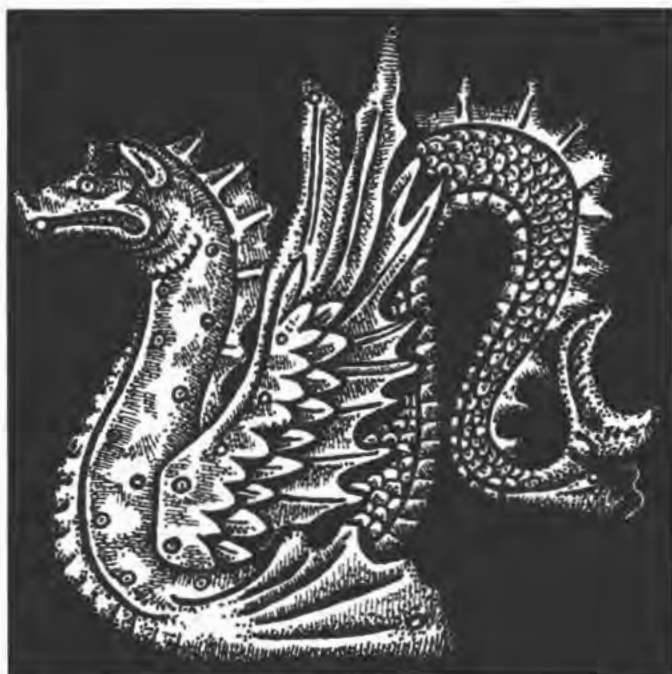
Some of the most dangerous monsters of the Oaxacan hills are the dreaded Nahuales. These fiends are shape-shifters capable of turning into powerful, black coyotes or spotted hawks of tremendous size. Along with their masters, the Lobison, the Nahuales feed on human blood and enjoy making sport of those they kill. They roam the hills and mountains of the Aztec lands. They prefer the forests around Oaxaca, never venturing into the main plaza or the village squares and avoiding fire. The moon is their source of strength, and in the open fields beneath a full moon, even the most daring warrior cannot succeed in battle against the Nahuales.

Nahuales are normal humans who are tainted by the bite of a Lobison. A single Lobison can create hundreds of these evil beasts, forming packs of stalwart warriors and using them to attack and feed upon helpless peasants. By spreading the curse of their horrible bite, a lone Nahuale can quickly form new packs in order to spread plague and destruction through the Aztec lands. However, without a Lobison to lead them, Nahuales are as equally prone to killing themselves in mass battle as they are to attack and destroy an Aztec village. They are almost completely chaotic, and incapable of restraining their impulses and instincts.

In their original form, Nahuales may appear as a normal Aztec villager or warrior, exactly as they appeared in their previous lives. The only sign of their condition is their unusual silver eyes which stand out against their slightly paler skins. They are somewhat feral in their behaviors, and do not act on any previous emotions or loyalties from their previous lives.

When a Nahuale transforms, it takes the form of either a tremendous, black coyote with silver eyes or that of a spotted hawk more than three times the size of any natural bird. The hawk form is simply for transportation and for stealth; with little attack capacity, no Nahuale will choose to fight while in this form.

Nahuales are intelligent, though feral, creatures. Although they attempt to use tactics and strategy in their attacks, too often their brains are overcome by the curse of their condition, and they are reduced to ravening, slaving beasts with little memory of battle-plans. A Nahuale in its human form will fight with a weapon if one is nearby, but on the whole these monsters prefer to transform into their coyote-like form and fight more effectively. If badly hurt, or if the majority of its pack is destroyed, a Nahuale will transform into its hawk form and flee, leaving behind injured or wounded comrades without a second thought.



Serpent Quetzal

The serpent quetzal is a distant cousin of both the magnificent quetzal bird and the fabulous coatl of legend. The serpent quetzal is a magical creature, very rare and exotic and very shy. It lives in the depths of the Aztec jungles and uses its abilities primarily to maintain a solitary, peaceful life. They are magnificently beautiful animals, with bodies resembling jewel-toned snakes with glorious, shining wings expanding from their back just behind their diamond-shaped heads. They move with an almost impossibly fluid grace, their bodies catching rays of sunlight and reflecting them back in every color of the rainbow. They are very intelligent and use their knowledge and instincts to remain hidden when danger is near. They are approximately 10 feet long when fully grown, with their bodies being just thicker than a man's arm. A fully grown serpent quetzal may weigh as much as 50 pounds.

Nahuale (cont.)

Pounce (Ex): If a Nahuale in coyote form leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a Full Attack even if it has already taken a Move Action.

Trip (Ex): A Nahuale that hits with its Bite Attack can attempt to Trip the opponent as a Free Action without making a Touch Attack or provoking an Attack of Opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to Trip the Nahuale.

Nahuale Curse (Su): Any humanoid hit by a Nahuale's Bite Attack or Claw Attack must succeed at a Fortitude Save at DC 15 or become cursed. The character will become a Nahuale in 24 hours.

Power of the Moon (Su): The brighter the light of the moon, the more powerful a Nahuale becomes. The stats above assume that the creature is encountered beneath a new moon. Under brighter moons, the monster gains three additional Hit Dice per phase of the cycle. Thus, under a crescent moon, Nahuales are at +3 Hit Dice, under a half moon, they have +6 Hit Dice, during the gibbous moon, they are at +9, and beneath a full moon, a Nahuale has 12 additional Hit Dice. Nahuales cannot bear the light of the sun and, thus, are only encountered at night.

Skills: Nahuales in animal form gain a +4 Racial Bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent. When in human form, the Nahuale receives a +4 Racial Bonus to Spot checks.

Serpent quetzal are solitary creatures, meeting only once in a decade so that the female may become impregnated and lay a clutch of 2-5 eggs. The female quetzal will remain with the eggs for only a matter of days after they hatch, explaining the world in very simple terms to her offspring before leaving them to their own fate. These creatures prefer their solitude, and almost never remain in groups.

Serpent quetzal are meat-eaters, hunting their prey among the highest branches of the Aztec forests. They rarely come to the ground, and almost never slither beneath bushes unless they are hiding from either prey or predator. Serpent

Serpent Quetzal

Size:	Small Magical Beast
Hit Dice:	4d10+4 (26 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+3 (Dex)
Speed:	20 feet, Fly 40 feet (Good)
AC:	16 (+1 Size, +3 Dex, +2 Natural)
Attacks:	Bite +3 melee (1d6-2 and Poison)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 5 feet
Special Attacks:	Constrict, Poison
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 feet, Low-Light Vision
Saves:	Fort +5, Refl +7, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 7, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills:	Balance +8, Hide +8, Listen +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3
Feats:	Alertness
Climate/Terrain:	Warm Forest
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Usually Neutral Good
Advancement:	5-8 HD (Small), 9-12 HD (Medium)

Constrict (Ex): A serpent quetzal deals 1d8 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-sized or smaller creatures.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude Save (DC 18), Initial Damage 1d4 temporary Strength; Secondary Damage 2d4 temporary Strength.

quetzal speak an ancient language of their own and an antiquated dialect of Nahuatl.

A serpent quetzal rarely attacks without provocation, and prefers to flee from danger rather than face it down. A female will fight if her eggs are in danger, and any serpent quetzal will fight if its life is in danger. But on the whole they do not seek out fights other than to feed.

Tzitzimil

The horrible Tzitzimil is a demon of great power. Nearly invisible, its translucent body resembles a pool of walking water, huge, man-shaped, with vast, viscous wings of gel-like fluid. It is amazingly strong, very clever, and delights in tempting and torturing good and innocent people to their dooms. A clever Tzitzimil is known to destroy an entire village, person by person, killing a single individual each day without ever being caught at its deadly pranks.

Usually, the clever Tzitzimil will try to scatter smaller foes using sweeping blows from its immense, transparent wings before moving in to attack. It prefers to fight from the air, using its abilities to sweep down and savage opponents from a position of surprise. Ambushes, traps, and swooping blows are all common tactics of a vicious Tzitzimil. Those opponents who attempt to close on the creature and pin it in should be wary of its Trample Attack, which can deliver a devastating blow to those who are unprepared.

Xolotl

Xolotl are demonic creatures spawned between the stars. When the Aztec god, Huitzilopochtli, fought with the heavens to defend his mother, he murdered his sister, the moon goddess, and scattered many of his other siblings among the skies. Some of the lesser children of Coatlique fell to earth as Xolotl, fallen beings of great power with an intense hatred for Huitzilopochtli and all of his favored creatures. Because of this vendetta, they hunt humanity and will do all that they can to destroy it.

Xolotl are demonic, otherworldly creatures whose ravenous hunger drives them to frenzied killing. Their sadistic impulses are often overcome by this hunger, and they are uncontrollable when they are surrounded by blood and flesh. A xolotl will fight to the death to destroy humans and has no fear except for their intense hatred of the sun. Xolotl look like spidery humanoids, with overlong legs and arms and a hunched appearance. Their flesh is as black as the darkness of a night sky, and their eyes shine like lamps of starlight against a pitch black, twisted face. They move with grace, but their claws and skin stink with an abyssal, sulphurous reek. Their hideous stench permeates their havens thickly, warning away all life.

Tzitzimitl

- Size:** Medium Outsider (Air)
Hit Dice: 8d8+24
 (60 Hit Points)
Initiative: +11 (+7 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 50 feet
AC: 17 (+7 Dex)
Attacks: Slam +12 melee
 (1d6+4), 2 Claws +7
 melee (1d4+2), Bite
 +7 melee (1d6+2)
Face/Reach: 5 feet x 5 feet / 5 feet
Special Attacks: Constrict, Trample,
 Wing Crush,
 Wing Sweep
Special Qualities: Elemental Subtype,
 Relentless Tracking,
 Smoke Body,
 Transparent
Saves: Fort +9, Refl +13,
 Will +7
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 24,
 Con 17, Int 12,
 Wis 12, Cha 24
Skills: Heal +3, Hide +18,
 Intimidate +12,
 Knowledge (Nature)
 +2, Listen +16, Move
 Silently +21, Search
 +9, Spot +11,
 Wilderness Lore +4
Feats: Alertness, Improved
 Initiative, Power Attack
Climate/Terrain: Any Land
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Always Lawful Evil
Advancement: 9-16 HD (Medium),
 17-24 HD (Large)

Tzitzimitl (cont.)

Constrict (Ex): If the Tzitzimitl lands a successful blow with its Wing Attack Crush, it may attempt to continue to squeeze the target for more damage. The creature makes a Grapple check as a Free Action and without provoking an Attack of Opportunity. If successful, it pins the target creature and inflicts 3d8+4 points of damage per round that it can maintain the hold. The Tzitzimitl may only perform this action on creatures of Medium Size or smaller.

Relentless Tracking (Su): The Tzitzimitl will always know the direction in which its target lies as long as the prey is on the same plane. This ability isn't fooled by Polymorph or any other similar spell, although Nondetection spells and Antimagic Fields will negate it. If Relentless Tracking is blocked, a Tzitzimitl will attempt to track its target through more conventional means.

Smoke Body (Ex): While in the form of a smoke cloud, a Tzitzimitl can pass through small openings and always moves silently. It is all but invisible whenever it is inside a cloud of smoke from a fire and receives the benefit of 100% concealment. While in this form, it can attack gaseous or vaporous targets with no penalties. It takes the Tzitzimitl three rounds to transform into or out of this form, and it can perform none of its other attacks while in the Smoke Body.

Trample (Ex): A Tzitzimitl can trample Medium or smaller creatures for 4d6+13 points of damage. Opponents who do not make attacks of opportunity against the Tzitzimitl can attempt a Reflex Save (DC 17) to halve the damage.

Transparency (Ex): In its natural form, a Tzitzimitl is nearly undetectable. Detect Invisibility spells will not reveal the Tzitzimitl, nor will Detect Magic. Spot checks (DC 25) will notice ripples through the Tzitzimitl's body as it moves. Uses of spells such as Gust of Wind (to cause large, uncontrollable ripples in its semi-gelatinous form) or Faerie Fire will uncover the creature.

Wing Crush (Ex): As a Standard Action the Tzitzimitl can attack a group with both its wings, bringing them together in a giant clap and engulfing a 10-square foot area. Those caught between its huge wings suffer 8d6+13 Crushing Damage. A Reflex Save at DC 17 halves the damage.

Wing Sweep (Ex): The Tzitzimitl can also flap its wings and create a gust of wind much like the Gust of Wind spell, except its speed and effects match that of a Hurricane. The gust of wind is a 20 feet wide and 20 feet high over a distance of 150 feet from the front of the creature.

Xolotl

Size:	Large Outsider (Evil)
Hit Dice:	6d8+24 (51 Hit Points)
Initiative:	+7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed:	40 feet
AC:	22 (-1 Size, +3 Dex, +10 Natural)
Attacks:	Bite +10 melee (1d8+5), 2 Claws +5 melee (1d6+2)
Face/Reach:	5 feet x 5 feet / 10 feet
Special Attacks:	Spell-like Abilities, Improved Grab
Special Qualities:	Darkvision 60 feet, Sunlight Allergy
Saves:	Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7
Abilities:	Str 20, Dex 17, Con 19, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 10
Skills:	Concentration +14, Hide +9, Listen +14, Move Silently +7, Search +8, Spellcraft +10, Spot +10
Feats:	Dodge, Improved Initiative
Climate/Terrain:	Any Land
Organization:	Solitary or gang
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Always Chaotic Evil
Advancement:	7-12 HD (Large), 13-18 HD (Huge)

Their wide mouths are filled with long, needle-like teeth, and an elongated tongue snakes out from between wide, hinged jaws. Xolotl are nearly eight feet tall, but they walk with a hunch and slide mannerism that makes them seem much smaller and more compact.

Some few, powerful beings use captured xolotl as guardians for their sacred spaces. More than one Aztec warrior has spoken of seeing these beasts clustering around such places as the Malinalco Cave, or the Cave of Legend near Oaxaca. Whatever draws them there is unknown, but their stench lingers on the wind in these places.

Xolotl enjoy combat, and, in particular, they prefer to rend and tear their opponent's flesh in the most sadistic, painful manner possible. Although they are clever, and very adept at using their abilities and skills, the typical xolotl does not pay much attention to tactics or strategy beyond that of the individual kill.

Xolotl (cont.)

Improved Grab (Ex): A Xolotl that hits with both Claw Attacks may attempt a Grapple as a Free Action without provoking an Attack of Opportunity. Held opponents suffer a -4 Circumstance Penalty to AC against attacks from the Xolotl's Bite Attack. The creature cannot attack with its claws while holding an opponent.

Spell-like Abilities: The Xolotl can cast the following spells at will: Blasphemy, Cause Fear (30-foot radius from the Xolotl), Darkness, Gaseous Form, Scare, and Telekinesis. Once per day, it can cast Blink and Summon Swarm. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (Save DC 13 + Spell Level).

Sunlight Allergy: Xolotl are damaged by contact with sunlight at a rate of 2d10 points of damage per round.

Skills: Xolotl receive a +8 Racial Bonus to Listen and Spot checks.

Part 7: Aztec Adventures



Included below are some short adventure seeds to get you started in your Aztec campaigns.

Beauty is the Beast

A message has come from the city of Cholula, begging for the aid of anyone who is faithful to the goddess Xochiquetzal. The goddess's golden statue has been stolen, and her immortal rage is beginning to make itself felt. While searching the city, the guards found remnants of an invading tribe's warriors, and they believe that the statue is being taken across the Aztec border, to be sacrificed to the other tribe's goddess of beauty. If this occurs, Xochiquetzal will be so insulted that her wrath upon Cholula and its people will never end. Even now, the women of Cholula are beginning to experience boils and sores on their faces and hands, and it is feared that the worst is yet to come.

The characters must track the enemy tribe back to their home and rescue the statue before it can be destroyed. Then it must be safely returned to Cholula and sacrifices made to the goddess so that she will be appeased.

Ignoble Sacrifice

A young Aztec warrior who was on the losing team of a tlatchli match is destined to be sacrificed when the sun rises on the next day. However, his father, a powerful and wealthy noble, has refused to give the boy into the hands of the priests. Both father and son vanished into the forest, and few traces of them exist. The characters must hunt down the infidel in the forest so that the boy may be properly sacrificed to avoid the gods' anger. The father must be punished for putting his own concerns over the will of the gods. The characters only have 12 hours before sunrise, though, to find the young man and his father. After that, the sacrifice will be late, and the gods will begin to show their displeasure.

The Lost Temple

A strange map was found inside a broken sword-hilt on the battlefield. The text is written in the language of a small, now enslaved tribe, and those few slaves who are willing to translate say that the map leads to an ancient temple long ago lost to the jungle's press. The priests of the city believe that more sacrifices, as well as treasure, lie in the ancient temple, and gather a group of brave warriors – the PCs – to retrieve everything of value that it holds.



However, even ancient and forgotten gods keep guardians. The temple is laden with traps and magical beasts that will oppose anyone plundering the long-lost hoard, especially in the name of foreign gods.

Fire!

A tremendous fire is sweeping through the valley outside Oaxaca, and it threatens to reach the main city in only a few days. A rampaging fire elemental has been seen among the flames, increasing the destruction. The fire elemental is a resident of the great mountain Popocatepetl, but he is very distressed and does not seem to be willing to listen to reason. If the motives for his rampage are not found, he may well set fire to Oaxaca and destroy the city. Someone must journey to the mountain and discover the cause of the elemental's fury and then find a way to appease it before the city falls.

Ruins

Deep in the forest lies a lost city, one that existed long before the Aztecs came from the island of Aztlan to build their empire. Watch-stones on the edge of the great ruined palace declare (in Nahuatl) that these people were also from the Isle of Herons, and that they built this city in deference to an unknown god. It is unclear what claimed their lives, but the watch-stones are inscribed with a warning of an "invisible killer." This fiend hungers for those who came after the people who built this city. The PC's will have to avoid unleashing it or, failing that, find a way to prevent it from destroying the Empire.

Beneath Still Waters

A dead body has been found in the Cholula Baths, completely drained of blood and strangely defiled. Stranger still, the body is not Aztec, but is some strange, white-skinned human whose features are unusual and unpleasant. The creature cannot be identified, nor can the workers at the hot springs remember that individual entering their establishment. No one in the city has ever heard of such a thing, and many are placing holy sand on their doorsteps in fear that demons are about to invade the city. Two days later, another body is found, and the Cholula Baths begin losing patronage. They call on the PC's to solve the mystery and, in the end, root out the demons that are inhabiting the deep waters below the city. One of them, the leader, lives in a waterfall just outside the city and has been searching for a means to slip into Cholula and defile its temples.

Red Star in the Heavens

The high priest of Quetzalcoatl in Cholula has been kidnapped, stolen from the pyramid without a word or a

sign. The priests are mystified, and no sign of struggle has been found. To the north, strange signs are appearing over the mountain range outside the city: falling stars and a bright red light that parts the heavens for a single minute at midnight for three nights. Are the mystic lights caused by Quetzalcoatl himself, and has the god returned? Was the priest kidnapped, and are the lights caused by the magnitude of his sacrifice? Whatever has happened, someone in the temple knows the secret of the high priest's disappearance, and it is up to the PC's to unravel the mystery before the city begins to panic.

Journey to Aztlan

The city's seer, an old woman named Pechitetl, has gone mad. She claims that she has met and spoken with Huitzilopochtli and that he has once more told the Aztec people to move as they once did from Aztlan. The priests at the sun temple refuse to believe her, and intended to sacrifice her to Huitzilopochtli so that the god himself can punish her arrogance. But their knives slide through her flesh and leave no injury. She is now being kept in the dungeons beneath the temple, but even without food, she does not grow sick or die. Rumors are spreading through the city that the old seer may be correct, and that the temple priests of Huitzilopochtli are ignoring their god's signs. What is actually occurring is that the old seer is a secret priestess of the trickster god, Tezcatlipoca, and the dark god is deliberately baiting the Aztec people in order to cause panic and to make them doubt Huitzilopochtli's power. The only way to find the truth is to travel north to Aztlan and ask Huitzilopochtli directly. But who has the courage to question a god?

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A stone tower with several arched windows stands on a grassy hill. The sky behind it is a dramatic mix of orange, yellow, and dark clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the distance, a small town is visible on the right.

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